THE

MASTER PASSION;

OR,

The History

OF

FREDERICK BEAUMONT.

VOL. II.

It is the show and seal of Nature's truth,
When Love's strong passion is imprest in youth.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR WILLIAM MILLER,
ALBEMARLE-STREET.

1808.

S. Gosnell, Printer, Little Queen Street.



THE

MASTER PASS

&c.

CHAP. XXXIV.

On the following evening, Frederick began his usual petition for musick.

"But stop a moment, Helena; I have something new for you."

He ran home,—and returned well laden with musick-books, and followed by a violin.—

"What 's that, Frederick?"

"You shall hear."—He took out the instrument, and placing some musick before Helena, said he would attempt the accompanyment.

It was not merely a piece of highly difficult execution, and one that called for peculiar neatness and precision of finger in

the lighter parts of the composition; but one which, in its adagio movement, required, to do it justice, the most consummate delicacy of tone and expression—and Frederick, who had long been plotting this little surprise upon his friends,—had acquired them all.—Helena had heard a fiddle tortured, but had never before heard a violin played—and she trembled with astonishment and delight, as she proceeded in her part.

Mr. Melcombe was in amaze.—

"Who has taught you all this, Frederick?" asked he.

"I have had two masters, Sir," replied he: one of them was an experienced old man; and the other"—said he, half aside to Helena,—"was a *little blind boy*."

"Why, perhaps," said Helena, presently afterwards, "they have been teaching you to sing, too."

"I will, at least, make the attempt, if you will support me in it."

She did so—and again he surprised—he delighted her by his performance. And

thus did this happy evening hang a new link to that golden chain which the immortal hand of Love had twined around their hearts.

"Now that we are alone"—said Frederick, the next morning as they sat together—"I have another song for you, Helena."

"O, let me see it!"—

"No, you must hear it first: it is your own, indeed, already; for you inspired both words and musick."

He took her hand; and resting his idle arm on the Piano Forte, in a voice of the mellowest tone, and sweetest expression, sang—

Ah! wherefore must those roses fade,
  That with Aurora's blushes vie?
And why must ruthless Time invade
  The melting lustre of that eye?—

To all but me may fade each grace,
  And the loud world from wond'ring rest;
While, in that fading form *I* trace
  The feeling soul that made me blest.

Those beauteous eyes, whose heavenly ray
May dimly shine to all but me,
With their last trembling beams shall say,
Still, still, my Love, they 're all to thee.

For thee they 've watch'd th' approach of morn,
That brought thee to my anxious sight,—
When far from thee by absence torn,
Have mourn'd, and wept, through many a night.

And they shall tell a tender tale,
Of sorrows past, and joys long o'er;
But hush!—that sigh, that look, that tear—
Forbid me, Love, from utt'ring more.

The tear did actually come at Frederick's call;—it fell upon his hand—he fondly pressed her hand within it—and she gently returned the pressure, in gratitude for the welcome tribute which his talents had paid to her

CHAP. XXXV.

The next evening brought a large addition to the usual party at Mrs. Villiers's.—First in order, and in dignity, appeared—Dr. and Mrs. Pomfret, together with their fair, slim, silent, daughter—just fifteen and a half. With these came also a lady who resided near them, and with whom Mrs. Pomfret was an oracle. This was Miss Winterton, a precise, elderly spinster, very tall, and very lean, attired in a primrose dress which was finely relieved by her complexion, of sombre brown, variegated with shades of yellow. Over a very high forehead strayed some very short, very black, but not very fine hair. Upon her head, or rather behind it, was placed a small white chip hat, turned up in front, and adorned with a crimson flower, and a large bow of bright lilac riband; *band*, and streamers of the same. She accosted Mrs. Villiers with a most affable smile, and complimented her

on the growth and improvement of her daughter, since she had last seen her.

"I fancy she is as tall as she will be," said Mrs. Villiers: "she is within an inch of her mother—(Mrs. Villiers was called a fine height), and I don't intend she shall look over my head;" adding, half aside to her daughter,—"she is quite saucy enough already."

Next appeared the *round Mamma*, once before celebrated at the church-door, with her two daughters; and a very ponderous son closed the rear.

After the usual greetings and enquiries, the party began to discuss the news of the country. Dr. Pomfret—whether in compliment to his character, his talents, or . . . his high birth—was profoundly attentive to Mr. Melcombe—and, during the greater part of the evening, exhausted in his service, his stores of ecclesiastical knowledge, classical opinions, and political *decrees*.

In the mean time—while the tea was carried round, the *lady* visitors began a most momentous consultation, whether

they should, or should not, visit a new family which had lately arrived at the cottage in the wood. It was about a mile off.

"I had not heard of *any* family as being there;" said Mrs. Villiers; "who are they?"

A general smile replied that this was the *very* point in debate.

"Why," said the plump matron, "they are a young lady, and a young man. They have not been there above a fortnight, and nobody as yet, I believe, has seen them any where.—I *heard say* it was a run-away match to Scotland;—and *some* don't know whether they are married at all. I am sure I know nothing about it, farther than what I tell you." As it did not exactly appear that the lady had told *any thing* that she *did* know, Mrs. Villiers suspended her judgment, but was literally *inclined* to think, that scandal was abroad.

"For my part,"—said Miss Winterton, "I am sure I know nothing in the world against the young people:—they may be very worthy, and I dare say they are; but

as to visiting them"—and she buttoned up her mouth—" I thought it most prudent for *me* to wait 'till I saw what Mrs. Pomfret meant to do."—

" O, as for myself," said Mrs Pomfret, who would have precisely suited " little Isäac's" taste in a wife, " I have taken care of my character for sixty years, and now I shall leave it to take care of itself;—and I am sure, Miss Winterton, if *you* like to go, *I* have no objection in the world."

" What is all that?"—asked Dr. Pomfret. His wife explained.

" No—O no—by no means, Mrs. Pomfret; until you have had an undeniable confutation of these reports:—for the present, I must insist upon it that you do not commit so great an indecorum as that of affording them your countenance."

Although Mrs. Pomfret was the Oracle, her husband was the *Priest*; and this decree was certainly intelligible, and, she well knew, irrevocable.—She was silent.

" Is there no one who has seen them?" —resumed the Doctor.

"There is one person who has seen them"—said Mrs. Lewis laughing, "for whose opinion *I* have a great respect; and that is, old Bernard; and he says the lady is a very sweet lady, and mighty kind-hearted; for that, seeing him working in the road, she had spoke 'mortal pretty' to him;—and the gentleman told him to come to his house when he wanted work—or a bit o' dinner; and as for the lady, she gave him half-a-crown."

"Aye, aye"—said Dr. Pomfret, "charity is the universal resource of those females who have plunged themselves into irretrievable errors; and it is founded on a doctrine no less erroneous than their conduct; videlicet, that 'charity covers 'a multitude of sins;' an expression in the mouth of every one; but of which the words, as well as the sense, are grossly perverted. The true reading is, 'charity shall cover the multitude of sins' —pointing, and directing, the human mind to that part of the duty of charity, which

consists in covering, or veiling over the sins of others."

"Your exposition is perfectly correct, Sir," said Mr. Melcombe.

"Doubtless, good Sir, to *you* the text required no elucidation; but, the ladies will excuse me if I surmised it possible that *they* might not be aware of its veritable meaning, which I have, therefore, endeavoured to expound. Indeed I cannot help being somewhat suspicious that the erroneous exposition to which I before alluded, is of *female* origin."

These words were followed by a solemn chuckle in which there was assuredly not *more* good humour than contempt—which latter sentiment was still farther revealed in his concluding words,—"but, indeed, we do not expect female orthodoxy, any more than female heterodoxy (and the world has been favoured with specimens of each), to stand its ground against a *serious* animadversion."

"And yet, Sir,"—said Mr. Melcombe, somewhat earnestly,—"although I never

can discover female heterodoxy without the deepest regret, I must allege with respect to the orthodoxy, or more properly the religion of women, it is, though possibly not so profound as that of learned men, who have acquired it by studious research, yet, generally speaking, of a more humble, sincere, and steady quality than that of our sex. Their feelings are allowedly more acute than ours, and they not infrequently devote them to Heaven with a fervency which is alike untainted by scepticism, and enthusiasm."

"Pshaw!" cried Dr. Pomfret, "their devotion is like the rest of their feelings, all fever and ague—and, as to their faith, it is a matter of *geography*, Sir; in England they go to church—in France, they *used* to go to mass—and in Jamaica they go to no church at all."

"Is not the case pretty nearly the same, Sir, with us high and mighty lords of the creation?—One of our profoundest writers has pronounced that 'men do most by 'example. We are all,' says he, 'a sort

'of chamelions, that still take a tincture 'from things near us.' The instances are not numerous, in *our* days, of the conversion of *men* even to the glorious truths of Christianity."

"Sir," said Dr. Pomfret, (whose deference towards Mr. Melcombe began to yield to his abhorrence of opposition, and that, on a subject on which he had established to himself all the opinion which he conceived it to deserve,) "permit me to say that reasonings, and principles, on either religion, or morality, require more *ballast* than nature has thought proper to give the fair creatures, *here*"—in a tone of affable raillery, and pointing to his forehead —"or, than, indeed, it is possible that their avocations should require."

Then, observing that none of the ladies were at that moment attending to him,—except his wife,—he continued, in the same tone—still fluctuating between jest and earnest—

"The savage life, Sir, is the life of nature:—there, depend upon it, women are

where they *should* be, in a situation subordinate to their governors. In Europe, and in the present day, we have done no good by pampering them with reading, and writing, and letting them *talk* to us:"—This was said laughing and half-aside—"Sir, it is all useless to them, and troublesome to ourselves: in their great-grandmothers' days, they were *nearer* the life of nature than they are at present: *then*, Sir, they knew what was for dinner, and helped to prepare it;—then, they staid at home, and were not plundered by their servants; they were acquainted with the use of their needles;—nay, their husbands' shirts were not only of their own making, but of their own *spinning*. Then, in short, they were, what women ought to be—"

"Good servants:" whispered Mrs. Villiers to her neighbour.

"I like," he continued, "to see them, as Johnson said, 'look very pretty, and very 'straight;' but, as for their *intellect*, Sir," lowering his voice a little,—"I would not give this pinch of snuff for a sack full of

it—the *company* always excepted"—with a sarcastic smile, however, which did not help to make the exception. Mr. Melcombe, in whose heart a never-dying affection for one woman, was accompanied by a tender reverence for the whole sex, had very impatiently borne these aspersions, for so he felt them, and could now bear them no longer.

" Sir," said he, " such reflections on the fairest, and most perfect work of creation, I never heard from the lips of a wise man, or a gentleman,—*before*;" (and Mr. Melcombe too, could smile satirically,) " and, unconvinced as I feel myself that there are any heights of virtue, or very many of intellect, to which the female mind, supported by education, and perseverance, might not aspire, your opinions, excuse me, Sir, appear little less than profane. If I would not wish my fair friends too devotedly to court the proud genius of science, it is not because I should *conclude* that he would frown on their supplications; —experience has, in various instances,

evinced the contrary :—but—because their very success in such pursuits might have a tendency to impair those softening graces which nature has thrown around them ;—graces, which I freely allow that in the very act of bestowing them, she has recommended to their peculiar care and cultivation."

Frederick sat by, in delighted, and confident solicitude for the victory of Mr. Melcombe in this interesting contest. Mr. Melcombe continued:—

" It should be remembered, Sir, that from the sex which you have been pleased to decry, are selected the dearest companions of lawgivers, and heroes ; nay, (to trace their history still higher) that, from their mothers, these exalted characters imbibed their earliest lessons both of heart, and head. If, then, it appear that characters of such high account have thought themselves congenially associated, when females were their chosen friends, it is obvious that the wife of every man, whose birth and breeding stamp him gentleman,

may rightfully aspire, not merely to regulate his house with accuracy, but also to support with dignity the rank she bears in it. You perceive, Sir, I shut out from her attention nothing that is to be considered as necessary or expedient; though I would certainly admit whatsoever is ornamental, and much that is ennobling. From none of the above departments do I wish the sex excluded, because I deem them capable of all. Let the taste and elegance of woman, refine, and decorate the magnificence of man:—let her neatness and her industry assist and cheer his humble occupations, and render even poverty supportable: —but let her also share the acquirements of his understanding; and let him remember, that, when upon this firm foundation she has built her conduct—there is raised a house of strength, in which her husband, during every storm of life, may safely rest."

"Crown him, ladies!" cried Frederick in an ecstacy—"crown the orator who has sung the *honours* of the sex—although

in prose — with the fervour of poetry, and the inspiration of truth! One word more," continued he, with eyes full of laughing triumph, "one word more will *I* produce from one of their warmest champions—the departed, lamented, Burns.

"'Woman,' says he, 'is the blood royal 'of life: let there be slight degrees of 'precedency among them; but let them 'ALL be sacred.'"

Dr. Pomfret, who had not sat easy in his chair for some time, appeared to *revive* at this. It was, he thought, so *very* extravagant, that it gave him an opportunity of brushing up his spirits by a laugh; but *such* a laugh!—'till we discover the art of writing sounds, there cannot be a hope of representing it. Imagine, if you can, a half-vented, half-convulsive laugh of unequivocal contempt; — not only for the whole female sex, but for both it's infatuated advocates; and, (as the side-long glance of his eye significantly told,) most particularly for the *last*.

The young man above-mentioned, who

had accompanied his Mamma, sat all this time in a "dumb, studious pout," and apparently totally deaf to the conversation. He was not *blind*, however; for he fixed, from time to time, his large, white eyes upon Helena, as she moved occasionally to attend to different parts of the company; to every one of whom she found something engaging to say. When the company were dispersed—all, save Mr. Melcombe and Frederick,—"I wonder what was the subject of that youth's cogitations!" said Frederick; "for he *looked* so profoundly contemplative, and he so steadily supported his character of a *mute*, that I would really give *twice* the *usual* reward offered on such occasions for '*his thoughts*.'"

"You would have a bad bargain, Frederick," said Mr. Melcombe: "don't suffer yourself to be imposed upon."

"I am not so sure of that," rejoined Frederick; "I caught him contemplating *Helena* several times."

"Are you jealous, Frederick?" asked Mr. Melcombe.

"Ah no! not *he!*" said Helena.

"*You* spoke very well for us," resumed she, turning to Frederick;—"but Mr. Melcombe! Mr. Melcombe!—what can we ever say, or do, to reward you?—Crown you!—Aye!—with a crown of diamonds, if I had one."

"Thank you, sweet Helen; but I would rather have one of laurel from your fair hand, than a *thousand*, of diamonds, with a kingdom to each;—and to say truth, Helena! both the crown, and the kingdom, would embarrass me most cruelly."

And now, Mrs. Villiers opened her determination respecting the young couple at the cottage in the wood.

"Helena," said she, "I shall put an end to all this tattle, for which there seems to be no foundation whatever.—All that *is* known of them, is that they are *charitable*; which, I am sure, is more than we can say, in another sense of the word, of their fair criticks;—and so we will certainly call on them to-morrow morning."

The gentlemen invited themselves to join the party; and on the next morning, they all set forward together.

CHAP. XXXVI.

THEY were soon in the shady, retired road, from which a small gate opened into the shrubbery. This gate they had often passed, though they had never entered it.

They paused, for a moment, to admire the surrounding scene. The trees sprang from a rising ground; and their luxuriant branches, delicately tinged with early green, hung high above their heads. The sound of a neighbouring water-fall reached their ears; but, from the spot on which they stood, it was not visible. The lane continued gently rising, and not a yard of level ground was to be seen. All was irregular, yet all was quiet, neat, and beautiful; and the whole aspect of this little retreat invited to residence, and repose.

They entered at the gate—pursued a narrow, winding walk that led them through the shrubbery, and soon arrived within sight of the cottage. Immediately behind, and far above it, rose, with bold abruptness, an eminence, covered to the summit with a mass of clustering trees. They could also now, distinctly see the waterfall, which hurried down from a sudden elevation into the channel of a small river, that sparkled, here and there, through various openings in the grounds. The cottage was of a singular construction, and adapted principally for a summer residence. On one side of the winding walk, were the offices, and sleeping apartments; and, on the other, perfectly secluded, two small sitting-rooms; both on the ground-floor. The entrance was by a little portico buried, as was nearly the whole front of the cottage, in the most luxuriant growth of jessamine, and woodbine; and the borders of the windows were composed of smaller pieces of glass, exhibiting every variation of the richest colours. It was a warm April morn-

ing,—the doors of this romantic and enticing abode were open, and our little party distinctly heard from within the notes of a harp. Involuntarily, they stopped,—they listened. The musick ceased, and they proceeded through the first sitting-room, or hall, which they found unoccupied; and, arriving at the interior apartment, perceived, before they reached the door, a young man of highly interesting appearance, leaning on the harp, which still vibrated from his fingers. He started, and arose gracefully at their approach. Mrs. Villiers was preparing the usual compliments of a first visit; when, advancing farther into the room, she perceived a lady, in whose countenance and figure, though now in the fulness of health and bloom, she immediately recognised the lady whom Frederick, near five months before, had rescued from her bed of snow. Helena was amazed and transported at the rencontre; nor less lively was the pleasure of the lady, at thus unexpectedly seeing all her kind, and attentive friends assembled

under her own roof. She introduced to them the young man before mentioned, as her husband; and then presented to him, in the persons of her new visitors, the benevolent strangers who had relieved and sheltered her.

He spoke, and looked, his thanks; and strove to mark, by his reception of them, his deep sense of their signal kindness to his wife.

Mrs. Villiers now addressed the lady in terms of flattering complaint, for not having made herself known as a neighbour.

"Indeed, my dear Madam," replied Mrs. Falkener, "I dreaded to be guilty of intrusion, by a step which would, in some sort, have necessitated you to become my visitor—a very unhappy method, as my conscience told me, of acknowledging your former kindness. This forbearance, however, has, I assure you, cost me dear; and I fully purposed to attend your church on Sunday next; when I trusted that I should find an opportunity of shewing my-

self to you.—We have not long been arrived from Scotland, whither I went soon after I saw you, and where I met—and—not *very* long after—plighted my faith to—that gentleman—and there, from a lady who had lately seen it in her travels, we heard of, and afterwards purchased, the cottage in which you find us."

"So much for the run-away match to Scotland!"—thought Mrs. Villiers.

The gentlemen, during this little history, were engaged in studying a beautiful painting, which Mr. Falkener informed them was a part of the furniture which they had found in the house; it represented a whole-length figure of Penelope asleep; and of her nurse in the act of approaching to awaken her.

Helena, who had now joined the little circle of connoisseurs, started as she threw her eye on the principal figure in the piece, forcibly impressed with the very striking resemblance which it bore to her mother. She was not the first who had discovered this resemblance; for the picture had, ex-

pressly on account of it, been reserved by Mrs. Falkener, from the sale of other moveables; in grateful memory of the kindness and humanity she had experienced from her whom it so strongly brought to her recollection. The affectionate Helena was enchanted with the picture, the cottage, and above all, the lady; to whom she warmly expressed her hopes that they should frequently meet, and never lose sight of each other again.

Mrs. Falkener felt assured that they should not—and was still more irresistibly than before, attracted towards Helena.

"What a little heaven upon earth you have here!"—cried the latter—"were it mine, I should be terribly idle, I am afraid, and should never find inclination for any employments but those of rambling about, and looking out of the window."

"Nay, I can assure you, we have done but little else ourselves;"—said Mrs. Falkener.

Mr. Melcombe offered to his new neighbours the free use of his extensive library;

while similar tenders of friendly service and attention were made by the ladies to Mrs. Falkener; and then after mutually repeated congratulations, the parties separated, all hoping, and promising, very soon to meet again.

"There now, Mr. Melcombe!—what becomes, pray, of your 'human probability?'"—asked Helena, triumphantly:—"you see we have found the 'snowy maid' again, though you were so very wise, and so very positive that we should not."

"I am glad of it, Helena—though I only said it was not likely; and I say so still."

"I don't believe he thinks we have found her yet;" said Helena, taking Frederick's arm. Mrs. Villiers accepted that of Mr. Melcombe, and all commenting on what they had seen, and comparing it with what they had *heard*, cheerily walked homeward.

CHAP. XXXVII.

Mr. Falkener was, unquestionably, very fond of his wife; yet was he not so exclusively devoted to her society, as to doat on retirement and sequestration for her single sake. He was, therefore, little less pleased with this acquisition of new friends, than she was with the revival of her former acquaintance with them, which, though short, had been such as extremely to awaken her feelings. When she was not, in some degree, interested about her associates, she was, in general, as indifferent whether she saw them at all, as Helena Villiers herself.

On the present occasion, Mr. Falkener was doubly impelled to cultivate the intercourse with his new friends; for, besides his general wish for the amusement afforded by society, he felt himself bound to the party in question, by the real services

which they had rendered to his wife. The welcome visit was soon returned; and was followed by very frequent meetings; each of which increased the good opinion and regard of all, and most particularly strengthened the sympathetic power which mutually attracted Mrs. Falkener, and Helena.

Mrs. Villiers was, one day, lamenting to the former, that a very short time would produce another separation; for that herself and daughter were under an engagement to visit a friend in London. Mrs. Falkener started with disappointment.

"And must my new-born pleasures," said she, "so soon come to an end?"

Helena united her lamentations with those of her friend—concluding with an ardently expressed wish that *she* could be of their party. Mr. Falkener heard this inclination expressed, and felt it to be in perfect coincidence with his own. His wife imagined that she could read thus much in his eyes; and, had she not been disposed for the scheme on her own ac-

count, would have no less earnestly promoted it, on his. She, accordingly, enquired of him whether they could not indulge themselves with a month's absence from home, and engage a lodging within reach of Mrs. Villiers. He entered, very readily, into the proposal. Mrs. Falkener then enquired at what time Mrs. Villiers proposed to depart.

"In about a week."

"If so," said Mrs. Falkener, turning to her husband, "I fear that we shall be disappointed in our hopes of accompanying the party—our friends, you know, may not arrive, in time, to permit it." Then, (to Mrs. Villiers)—"I am in daily expectation of a sister who has long been extremely ill;"—and she sighed deeply—"she will remain with us but two or three days, and then proceed to her own home; but before I can go to London, I must necessarily see her. I think, however, we may safely promise, that if we do not accompany, we will very shortly follow you."

Within a few days after this conversation,

Frederick and Helena were walking slowly along, in a soft beautiful evening; and, for some time, had freely enjoyed a happy interchange of thought, when Helena observed that they were not far from Mrs. Falkener's, and proposed that they should look in upon her, and enquire whether she could yet engage to accompany them to London. They did so; but Mrs. Falkener was in the same doubt, arising from the same expectation as before.

"But sit down," said she, "sweet Helena—you see I am growing familiar with you already." Helena smiled, and took her hand.

Mrs. Falkener continued—"There is a lovely moon, and you shall not yet depart."

Helena re-seated herself—and they were all engaged in very earnest conversation, when, at the sound of a carriage stopping at the gate, Mrs. Falkener started, and turned pale—suddenly exclaiming—

"It is my sister! my dear friends, excuse me;—hasten, I intreat you:—go,

Helena perceived that there was something very uncommon in this agitation, which she was beyond measure distressed at, feeling that her presence considerably increased it. She had thrown off her hat, and was now re-adjusting it with all possible expedition. Frederick had just taken her hand, and was hurrying with her through the outward room, in which a lamp was burning,—when they met the expected lady, closely followed by a gentleman.

Frederick stopped short—and was unable to move a limb.

"Merciful Heaven!"—cried he—"can it be——?"

The lady, in a soft voice, uttered a few words to her companion.

"It is her voice"—cried Frederick—then, suddenly remembering Mrs. Falkener's anxiety for their departure, he hurried on—yet, casting on the lady a look of scrutinizing attention, he said, as he passed—

"It must be she!"—then, apparently

lost in anxious recollection, he followed Helena to the gate. She had marked his agitation. Astonishment—curiosity—and these of no pleasurable kind—assailed her at once. As Frederick joined her at the gate, they were accosted by two gay young men of their neighbourhood, on horseback. These gentlemen, instantly recognising them both by the bright light of the moon, checked their horses, and alighted.

One of them walked forward by the side of Helena, and the other followed, engaging Frederick by the arm, and by the ear. Helena's companion addressed her continually, but received, to his astonishment, very distant, and negligent replies. She had, however, no quarrel with her disappointed companion:—she only wished him in some other country, or in some other world. She would, certainly, however, have answered him, with her usual politeness; but—she knew not always what he said. She thought that the way was lengthened since she had traversed it before. At last she was relieved from her distress,

by arriving at her own gate. The young equestrians wished her a good evening; but insisted on accompanying Frederick home. They would call on Mr. Melcombe. "He is the finest fellow in the world," said one of them, "and as pleasant and entertaining as if he had never heard of a black coat."

Helena walked on towards the house, in so deep a reverie, that she was passing by her mother, who had come out to meet her.

Mrs. Villiers, looking earnestly at her—

"Helena, my dear child, are you walking in your sleep?" Helena begged her pardon—and they entered the house together. Mrs. Villiers clearly discerned that something had disturbed her. She affectionately asked her confidence, and immediately obtained it. Mrs. Villiers smiled — and endeavoured to rally away her apprehensions:—

"It will be explained to-morrow, Helena,—do not doubt it." Helena pressed the hand of her mother, and loved her the

more for her confidence in Frederick: yet, she slept little—and her dreams were all of Frederick, and the unknown lady. When she awoke, she rose immediately,—lest she should dream again.

"My mother thinks me wrong," said she, as she paced up and down her apartment; "I will make no conclusions, 'till I see him." She tried to read—but she only saw, or seemed to see, the words.—"It is her voice!"—"It must be she!" After breakfast, she walked into the garden. Old Bernard was there at work. She was passing him unnoticed; but he took off his hat, and wished her a good morning.

"Good morrow, Bernard:—have you been here long?"

"Why, Madam, I was coming at six o'clock, but I did not get here till e'en a most seven—'causen I met young Mr. Beaumont, and he got a talking to me:—and he speaks so pretty, you see,—just like you, Madam! And he axed me a mort of questions all about the folks in the wood,—'causen I works there.—So, to be

sure, he thought how I must know all about 'em—and he wanted to know every think about the lady and gentleman as comed last night; and, la dear! I could not tell him nothing at all—and that vexed him enough, I'll warrant him—'causen I met one of the sarvants just now, and he said how she is a mighty pretty sweet lady."

Bernard had rested on his spade, while he gave Helena this information, and now returned to his work, little imagining its effect.

"Frederick talking to old Bernard about Mrs. Falkener's family concerns!" said she to herself—and, entering her mother's dressing-room, she perceived Mr. Melcombe just taking his seat, and heard Mrs. Villiers enquire after Frederick.

"I know nothing about him"—said Mr. Melcombe; "I was out late last night; and on my return, I heard that he had had two visitors, and was gone to bed; and this morning, I hear he received a letter very early, and went out, leaving word that he should not return to breakfast."

Helena, whose eyes had involuntarily been fixed on Mr. Melcombe, now felt that he would probably read their meaning; and finding that neither her fears, nor her feelings, could any longer be controlled, she hastily left the room, and shutting herself up in her own apartment, gave vent to a flood of tears.

"But what weakness is this!" cried she —"either he will explain all satisfactorily, or he is not worthy of my regret."—And again she wept at the possibility of such an alternative. At length, after some hours of wearisome conjecture, having, from her window, seen Mr. Melcombe depart, —she collected her spirits, and nourishing a latent hope that all would be explained, she ventured once more into her mother's dressing-room, and was sitting at her work most profoundly silent, when Frederick entered. He extended a hand to each of the ladies. Helena gave him her hand, but it spoke no welcome to his. He made his usual affectionate enquiries after her; her answers were short, and

She continued to work—but trembled so violently, that she drove her needle into her finger. Frederick shrinking at the sight of a few ruddy drops that followed it, started forward to assist her. She fixed on him a momentary look of doubtful anxiety, and declined his assistance.—

"It is of no consequence," said she; and, throwing down her work, twined her handkerchief round the wounded finger—her face, in the mean time, glowing with suppressed emotion. Frederick looked earnestly on her for a moment—then conversed with Mrs. Villiers—so did Helena—but no word, or look, from her rejoiced the unfortunate Frederick. He felt most deeply mortified; and, having made divers unavailing efforts to draw her into conversation, was, at last, proudly silent; and, in a short time, a messenger from Mr. Melcombe called him away. Helena passed a day of torment.—Mrs. Villiers herself knew not now what was to be thought. In the evening, however, he came again. Mrs. Villiers testified her

usual pleasure at seeing him, and rallied him on his abrupt departure in the morning.

"We could not indeed," said Helena, "expect the favour of another visit to-day."

"Why so, Helena?—because my reception in the morning was not very encouraging?"

Mrs. Villiers left the room.

Frederick continued:

"My dear Helena, what can have been the matter, this morning—I could scarcely obtain a word from you during the whole time of my stay:—your mother, too, looks half offended, while she rallies me.—Tell me my sins, thou pretty little despot,—or how can I confess, repent, or reform them?"

"Nay, Frederick, I thought you looked rather displeased, than distressed, at your reception in the morning."

"Well—perhaps I did venture to be a little discontented—at finding you of-

fended with me without the shadow of a cause."

"Oh! I have no title to be offended with you on the subject."

"The subject, Helena? what subject?"

"Nay—you are right possibly in your concealments, and mysteries:—I am not at all offended, I assure you."

"What concealments?—what mysteries?—my dear creature, you speak in riddles."

"Nay, Frederick;—after yesterday evening———"

"And what of yesterday evening, Helena?"—

"Surely, the object which so electrified you at the cottage—you—can want no explanation from me."

A gleam of light now, for the first time, broke on the mind of Frederick.

"What!"—said he—"is it the lady who arrived last night, that has occasioned———"

"Certainly it is,—combined with the

words you uttered,—and with what I have heard this morning."—

"Well!" cried Frederick, "thank Heaven it is no worse! what you have heard, I know not.—My own words I can fully explain. This I should certainly have done last night, had it been possible—and came this morning purposely to speak of the subject to which they alluded; but the chilling aspect of the *Heavens*"—and he looked mischievously in *her face*,—"frightened all other ideas out of my head. Do you not remember my account of my visit to St. Luke's,—and the melancholy story of Emily Burrard, and her lover, as I formerly wrote it to Mr. Melcombe?"—

"He never told us a word of it:—probably because it was melancholy, and he thought it would give us pain."

"However, such a story, my Helena, I heard, and told; and when I met this lady yesterday evening, I was so stricken with the similitude of her features, and her voice, to those of the poor young woman who had

so deeply interested my compassion, that I unwarily stopped, and unconsciously uttered the words which have so disturbed you."

"And is this all?"—asked Helena.

"And this, upon my honour," said Frederick, "is all."

She now frankly gave him her hand;—and with it, a look, in which there was such a whimsical assemblage of shame at her own rapidity of conclusion,—saucy reluctance to confess it,—smiling delight that all her fears were done away,—and mock deprecation of his High Mightiness's displeasure, that he caught her in a rapture to his heart—saying—

"*You* to *dream* of attraction for *me* in any living thing except yourself!—*you* jealous!—while I sit wondering from hour to hour, how any man who has but seen you can remain constant to any other woman breathing."

"And now," said she—while the tears hung on her blushing cheek,—"having got through this quarrel, Frederick, I

have a great mind to conjure up another with you, for having made me betray two weaknesses."—

"What can they be, my Helena?"

"O traitor! as if you did not know;—jealousy, and love:—but don't presume upon it, for fear I should discard one to rid me of the other."

"No—not for millions!—if they *must* go together, keep them both by all means."

"Yes—they are so very *amusing* when together, it is a pity they should ever be separated."—

All was then explained—the story of Emily Burrard—the detail of old Bernard—the letter—and the early visit;—perfectly unconnected as were the two latter with the other circumstances of alarm

> "Were to the jealous, confirmation strong,
> As proofs from Holy Writ."

The letter was a very innocent letter from Beaumont's friend Sackville, inviting him to an early breakfast at an inn a few

miles off; where he was waiting for him, in company with another friend—both on their way in a tour through Wales.

"I cannot help hoping," said Frederick, —"that this poor little girl is the very same creature that so deeply interested me before.—I wish I could see her again! —*Might* I call at the cottage in my walks, Helena?"

"How do you *dare* laugh at me? take care I do not send you there this moment to punish you."

The next day, Frederick was again with Helena: and soon after his departure, she found in her netting-box the following lines in his hand-writing:—

O let those jealous fears of thine
Be hush'd in this fond heart of mine!
Those jealous fears I'll learn to charm,
And chilling doubt to rapture warm.
If a kind look, or word should rove
From thee whom I alone can love,
Ten thousand kinder words shall tell
How true I love thee—and how well!
And to thy soul conviction give,
That 't is for thee alone I live!

Helena perused them with no common feelings of gratification.—She even deigned, the next morning, to make a kind reply to them, in a few lines which she had just concluded, when Frederick entered. With a downcast look, she suffered him to take possession of them:—

Shall I subdue the tender fear?
Shall I suppress the rising tear?
While they possess the magic art
Such truths to win from Fred'rick's heart?
His soothing words, his deathless love,
My terrors calm—my doubts remove.—
Yet, stay, rash girl!—with *fancied* woes
Disturb not thou his mind's repose:—
But in that noble, faithful breast
My doubts, my fears,—for ever rest!

Frederick in transport kissed these answering, and consoling lines,—repayed her with a thousand flattering acknowledgments—and told the beloved author of them, that they should live on his heart,—in company with her "Mary of Buttermere;" (which he had stolen from her;) "and as for this precious morsel"—he

cried—" *should I* ever feel a doubt,—a fear,—of the tender constancy of that inestimable heart—this shall be my safeguard, my charm—my talisman.—I will look upon it, and doubt shall die."—

CHAP. XXXVIII.

The next day, a note arrived from Mrs. Falkener, apologizing for her sudden banishment of her friends, and entreating them all to pass the evening with her. They did so.—When they arrived at the cottage, Frederick, examining still more closely the features of the unknown lady, who was introduced as Mrs. Warton, felt more and more confirmed in his recollection of her.

She addressed the gentleman who sat beside her, under the name of Henry—

Henry!—Frederick started at the name, and had not a doubt remaining. He felt most deeply interested, and gratified at beholding again in a state of tranquillity and happiness, the innocent and afflicted being who had before so painfully agitated his feelings.—

He conjectured, and hoped, that the death of her first husband had freed her from misery and distraction, and that she was at length happy with the beloved Henry, whose death she had lamented.—All this was confirmed in a very few days by Mrs. Falkener; who, as soon as Mr. and Mrs. Warton had left her, paid a visit to Mrs. Villiers—and, having observed the involuntary start of Frederick, and the earnest and sympathizing expression of his eyes, when he surveyed Mrs. Warton,—suspected that he had somewhere seen her, or been acquainted with her misfortunes. This suspicion she imparted to Helena; and a full explanation immediately followed.

Mrs. Falkener informed her friends that

her sister had recovered her health both of body and mind; though she still retained a certain pensiveness of look and manner;—her nerves, she said, had not entirely recovered their tone; nor, probably, ever would. She added, that, on the death of Mr. Robson, a sufficient sum had been collected from the wreck of his affairs, for the purchase of a small estate in Herefordshire, which was Mr. Warton's native country; and that thither they were now gone, to retirement, "and I trust"—she concluded in a tender voice—"at last, to happiness."

Mrs. Falkener then observed that she had been so much retarded, by this visit, in her preparations for London, that it would certainly not be in her power to accompany the party; but that she hoped very soon to follow them.

On the evening that preceded the day fixed for the commencement of the journey, Mr. Melcombe, as had often happened before, was grievously bewailing his approaching solitude.

"I wish"—said he, "you would do one thing to comfort me!—promise me that you three will, soon after your return, put yourselves under my guidance for a few weeks on a tour through Wales; with the noblest scenes of which you young ones are totally unacquainted."

It required no heroic exertions of friendship to concur in this plan; to which with united voices, they agreed.

Mr. Melcombe insisted upon riding the first ten miles with them in the morning; "although," he said, "it would only make his return the more solitary and forlorn."

CHAP. XXXIX.

At the appointed hour they all set forward. Mrs. Villiers and Helena were attended by Marian in the coach, and John on horseback.

Frederick began his journey by riding with Mr. Melcombe. During this outset, none of the party were very gay.

At the first stage they breakfasted together, and Mr. Melcombe taking an affectionate leave of the ladies, and telling Frederick, as he shook his hand, that he "sorely envied him,"—rode slowly, and pensively, homeward.

Frederick now took his seat in the coach, by the side of Marian; with whose restraining presence he would gladly have dispensed. Helena, who had never before been so far as twenty miles from home, was pleased with the novelty of the changing scene; yet, as she lost sight of her native mountains, found nothing in the tranquil

scenery of other countries, to compensate for these, either to her feelings, or her taste. But her spirits were on the wing: she was with her mother, and with Frederick; and she was animated, happy, and engaging.

As they were sitting round the table, at the inn, after dinner,

"I feel," said she, "somewhat like the Princess Nekayah on leaving the happy valley. I do not, indeed, expect all the people I meet to prostrate themselves before me; but I am continually looking for the faces of old acquaintance, and wondering why nobody addresses us by our names."

"I hope," said Frederick, "that you will be more successful in your search after happiness, than was that said princess. I observe, however," turning to Mrs. Villiers, "that there was one subject of speculation, into which this sapient Brother and Sister never entered, in their own instance; nor were they fortunate enough to meet with others who had."

"What was that?" asked Helena.

"Only Love," answered Frederick;—"and then they wisely concluded that there was no happiness to be found on earth."

"That was certainly among the few subjects in which the learned author of the book was not profoundly *read*"—said Mrs. Villiers.

Their journey was prosperous, and pleasant through the first day, and the second. On the third, Mrs. Villiers proposed the amusement of visiting a beautiful seat, by which she knew they must pass; and calculated that they should afterward reach London before dark. The object of their examination, however, was to Helena, so very attractive, and the paintings so chained her attention, that more time was expended in the survey, than could very prudently be spared from the journey.

They took a short repast, and used every possible means to promote expedition;—but they were effectually delayed, about four miles short of Hounslow Heath,

by one of the horses falling suddenly lame. On examination, this was found to be occasioned by the loss of a shoe, and the postillions agreed that the foot was so tender, from having been unskilfully shod, that all they could do for him was to make the best of their way to the next farrier, who lived about two miles farther on the road.

"Cannot you take off two of the horses?" asked Frederick—but the drivers were of opinion that the coach and the luggage would be so heavy for the remaining two, that they should make a still slower progress than with the lame one. There was no remedy; and they proceeded more gently, perhaps, than patiently, forward.

When they arrived at the farrier's a considerable time elapsed, before the operation of replacing the shoe could be performed. —By the time it was accomplished, the evening was closing in. Frederick hinted to the postillions the necessity of expedition, and they drove furiously on.

When they had proceeded about half way over the heath, they heard a whistle —and the next moment a violent outcry of " Stop ! stop !" was followed by a volley of execrations.

" What is the matter ?" cried Helena —terrified by the oaths.

" Don't be frightened," said her mother, trembling,—" they are highwaymen ; —they will not hurt us I hope ; but prepare your purse, and give it them on demand." She did so, as soon as the tremor that seized her would permit.

One robber stood at the horses' heads ; another flung open the coach-door, and thrust in a large pistol,—pointing it as it chanced close to the breast of Helena—at the same time vociferating, " Your money and watches."

" Villain ! remove your pistol instantly," said Frederick, at the same time, catching ineffectually at the hand that held it.

" Peace !" cried the terrified Helena,— " Be silent, if you have any pity upon me, and give him your purse."

The high-spirited Frederick dropped his hand :—saying only,

" Don't fire, Sir, and you shall have my money, and my watch."—The latter he delivered to him immediately.

" Don't be frightened, Sir,"—said the fellow : " I never hurt any gentleman or lady, if they will only give me all they have."

" Kind ruffian !"—thought Frederick—but he had made a vow of silence, as sacred as that of La Trappe.

When Frederick had delivered his watch, the fellow grew outrageous for the purse ; —but the purse was the work of Helena—and Frederick began to shake out its contents ;—when the robber made a snatch at it—saying, " Purse and all—D—me, do you think I can wait here all night ?"

" No, Sir ; the purse is nothing to you ; and, to me, every thing ; and you shall not have it."

" Give it him for Heaven's sake," cried Helena : " you shall—indeed you shall—have just such another." Frederick shook

his head, and continued to disengage the money; which, as the purse was small, made some delay, and the robber continued to use the most dreadful execrations, 'till at last, exasperated beyond all farther endurance, he presented his pistol full at Frederick; "Stop but one moment," cried Helena, resolutely addressing the villain, "and *I* will give you the purse."—She then extended her hand, saying—

"Give it to me, Frederick;" but while she spoke, the pistol was fired—she uttered a shriek of agony, but, perceiving no change in Frederick, she hoped that the ball had missed it's aim, and endeavoured to recover herself.

The next moment, Frederick, who could no longer bridle his struggling wrath, seized the arm of the robber, and wrenched the pistol from his hand, just in time to level it, through the window on the opposite side, at the breast of his comrade; who, on hearing the pistol, had rushed to the spot.

"Stand off, villain!" said Frederick, "or take this."

The fellow, concluding that the pistol was loaded, and, at the same instant hearing the wheels of another carriage, at a short distance behind, made off at full speed with his companion.

Frederick now used all his eloquence to cheer and console his friends:—they panted, and trembled, and, at last, wept, and were easier.

"O Frederick," cried Helena, "you frightened me ten times more than the robber. The moment you seized his arm, I *heard* the pistol destroy you."—

"But when I saw the miscreant presenting it at your heart, Helena, how could I endure it?—You ought to admire me for the rest of my life for submitting to so much as I did, at your bidding;—and quietly hearing myself told not to be frightened."

"*But* oh! what a mercy it was," exclaimed Helena, "that the pistol missed you."

He did not contradict this; and, to divert the attention of both the ladies from past alarms, said, smilingly,—"These gentlemen were not quite so delicate, and considerate, in their mode of depredation as one of their brotherhood, who robbed two ladies of my acquaintance, from whom I afterwards heard the particulars. When they had delivered up all their riches,—which he had required of them in the politest manner possible, he said,—

"'If you meet any body else on the 'road, ladies, please to remember, my name 'is Rover; and if you will do me the honour 'of mentioning it, you will not be molest-'ed:—Rover, ladies:' and then, wishing them a pleasant journey, and making them a very fine bow, he disappeared."

Frederick now proposed that they should stop at Hounslow for the night;—and Mrs. Villiers, who had not positively fixed her day of arrival with her friend, readily agreed to do so.

Frederick, having seen them accommodated with a decent apartment, went to

enquire what the house could furnish in the form of supper;—but, when he returned to his fellow-travellers, he found them still so much agitated by their late alarms, that they were unable to partake of what he had ordered for them.—Frederick applied all his powers to soothe and tranquillize them, but the effort of placing a chair for himself by the side of Helena, occasioned the blood to gush out through the sleeve of his coat.—Helena perceiving it—shrieked, trembled, and grew faint. He assured her that the wound was nothing—that the ball had merely grazed his arm; —adding—

"I meant, like a true knight, to have borne my wound in silence. Mine hostess has been charitably binding it up for me; though, I conclude, not very skilfully, since so slight an exertion has deranged the bandage."—

"I wish we could have reached London to-night!"—said Helena, trembling;—"it may be worse by the morning for want of proper care."—

He assured her that there was not a chance of this calamity.

Mrs. Villiers partook of Helena's alarms, and they both became most extremely impatient for their arrival in London.

The next morning, Frederick replied to their anxious enquiries, by repeated assurances that his arm had given him but little uneasiness during the night, and faithfully promised Helena that it should be properly attended to at the end of the journey. She would not however be content to enter on the short remainder of that journey, 'till he had sent for the best assistance afforded by the town in which they were.—The wound was examined, properly bound up, and declared to be of no material import. Once more, then, with spirits somewhat tranquillized, and refreshed, they set forward on their journey, and reached London without further accident, or alarm.

CHAP. XL.

HELENA had no long time to contemplate the novel and busy scene now presented to her eyes and ears, before the carriage stopped at Mr. Morley's house in Wimpole Street. She knew that her mother and Mrs. Morley had not met for many years; and that, in the interval, her mother, if not also her friend, had endured heavy sorrows—and she feared that each would be deeply affected at the meeting. She, therefore, lingered below, under pretence of speaking to Marian, while her mother was conducted to the drawing-room.

Frederick took a short leave, for the purpose of establishing himself at the nearest hotel; bearing with him, however, the positive commands of Helena, not to return to her 'till he had submitted his arm to the care of a surgeon.

In a few minutes, she was invited to

walk up stairs.—She went timidly into the drawing-room, where her mother presented her to Mrs. Morley. That lady, (who was, in all respects, worthy to be the friend of Mrs. Villiers,) received her with smiles, as well as words, of peculiar kindness; and taking her hand, placed her between her mother, and herself.

Helena was charmed with this reception; and, raising her apprehensive eyes, spoke her sense of it in a voice and manner which were all her own; and which took immediate possession of Mrs. Morley's heart. She pressed the hand of her friend, saying to her, half aside, while she fixed on Helena a look of admiration,—

"There are few such consolations under the sorrows of life, as you can boast."

Mrs. Villiers, having now intimated that Mr. Frederick Beaumont had escorted them to London, requested, and easily obtained permission to introduce him to her kind hostess, who had been previously apprized of his situation in the family, from Mrs. Villiers's letters.

He came—was introduced, and received an invitation to dinner; which, it will be supposed, he was not backward in accepting.

When the dinner-hour arrived, Mr. Morley made his first appearance, and they dined *en famille*. His bow was polite, and his reception hospitable: yet his guests secretly felt, that in neither was there the openness, the animation, and the benignity, which they had ever found so peculiarly engaging in Mr. Melcombe.

At dinner, their conversation was of their journey, of their robbery, of the news of the day, and the amusements of the town. Mrs. Villiers found herself unwarily examining the expression of Mr. Morley's brow, with an intentness which attracted the eye of her friend. Mrs. Villiers withdrew her own, and sighed.

In the morning, Mr. Morley's carriage was ordered, that the ladies might be introduced to an elegant dress-maker, and their wardrobe disposed into somewhat of a more modern form. When they had

concluded this important concern, and were returned home, Mrs. Villiers and her friend passed some interesting hours in a tête-à-tête; during which, many circumstances of heart and feeling, which had never been written, were mutually brought forward, and discussed.

Mrs. Morley had many scenes, and incidents to relate, of her long, and distant wanderings; and Mrs. Villiers told of her sorrows past, and her present anxiety respecting her daughter's happiness. All was unfolded, but Mr. Melcombe's love. Sacred it had ever been in her eyes, and sacred it remained. Mrs. Morley, also, "still kept something to herself"—but it could not be long ere Mrs. Villiers must necessarily discover what that lurking something was.

On the following evening, Mrs. Morley was to receive a large party; and kindly told Helena that she "felt quite vain of the privilege of introducing her."

Mrs. Villiers enquired of her friend whether she might be indulged with the

liberty of ordering a Piano Forte for her daughter?

"I will mention it to—to Mr. Morley —I dare say he will not object to it."

She seized the first private opportunity of doing so.

"Noise, and nonsense!"—said he.

"I feared it would be troublesome to you; but Mrs. Villiers is anxious respecting her daughter's progress in musick, and named it to me herself. It should stand in the back drawing-room, if that would be *least* unpleasant to you."

"Why, that's just over my head, when I *am* at home."

"Would you like it better, then, in the front room—or, not at all? if you will furnish me with any reason that I may allege to Mrs. Villiers for refusing it."

"No—let it come."

Mrs. Morley sighed heavily; and giving no report of the debate to her friend, sent immediately for an instrument. In the evening, Mrs. Morley proposed cards:—but Mrs. Villiers said that Helena had all

that science to learn; and Mr. Morley pleaded an engagement, and took a temporary leave. Soon after his departure, Mrs. Morley entreated Helena to play.

"Perhaps," said Mrs. Villiers, "Mr. Morley is not a lover of musick."

"Not a passionate one," was her reply.

Helena played, and sung; and Mrs. Morley, who *was* a passionate lover of musick, heard her with a delight which she fervently expressed.

"You are most kindly encouraging to my Helena's talent," said Mrs. Villiers.—"Yet I should wish her to receive a few lessons in singing, while she remains in town."

Mrs. Morley's heart sunk. She felt a dread at being driven to propose this (vainly as she too well knew that it would be), to her husband; or, of confessing to her friend the *why not*. She evaded both, by observing that a master might possibly strengthen Helena's voice, but could not make it sweeter.

Mrs. Morley had been charmed with Frederick's *abord*, and had invited him to join the expected party.

The rooms began to fill, and Helena to tremble at the first encounter of so large a party.

To those who came in, while space and opportunity permitted, Mrs. Morley presented her new inmates individually. One young lady, after the introduction, spoke not a word to Helena; but seated herself at some little distance, and very deliberately fixing her eye-glass, while she seemed to be studying her countenance, stared her *out of it.*

"I shall challenge that woman, if she spies at you much longer,"—whispered Frederick.

"Is this London high breeding?" enquired Helena; who was really distressed by this very accurate investigation, and the more so, from observing that two or three —*gentlemen*—they appeared to be—were also severally examining her in the same mode, with *an eye a-piece.*

She tried to rally off her embarrassment, however,—saying aside to Frederick—

"Why has not man a microscopic eye?"

In a few minutes after, a very fine man stalked round the room, with another very fine man under his arm; and, as he passed Helena he did not peer at her through a glass, but, he drew up his eyes, as if endeavouring just to see a little;—and, fixing them on her for a few seconds, as he passed on,—

"Fine girl, faith!"—was distinctly audible to *her*, though not to Frederick; who was just then leaning behind her chair, to speak to Mrs. Villiers. Soon after,—

"Who is she?—What is she?—What *has* she?"—was half whispered, and half buzzed, all round the rooms, which were, by this time, nearly full. The extreme warmth of their atmosphere increased the native bloom in Helena's cheeks, which was further deepened by the extraordinary kind of notice she had attracted, the tokens of which her total ignorance of the world occasioned her to mistake for affronts;

whereas they were the infallible marks of all that distinguished and distinguishing approbation, which the great world never fail to bestow on the first appearance of elegance and beauty. She had also, if she could but have understood it properly, an almost unparalleled triumph, in attracting, and preserving, a considerable portion of notice and speculation, even after the result of the last interrogatory of "what has she?" came to be fully known. This it very shortly was, by means of confidential queries from one to the other, and, at last, to Mr. Morley; from whom authentic information was procured, that this was the daughter of Mrs. Villiers (who soon acquired the title of the grave lady),—that she had no fortune in possession; nor even in expectation, beyond a moderate one from her mother; and that they were both natives of Wales.

"O then," said a fine Miss,—"I suppose that handsome fellow that talks to her is Welsh too; for she seems to answer him: and they can't speak any English, can they?"

"Welsh!—dear me! I suppose she is

very passionate; though she does not look so."

Then, going to a dear friend at a hazard-table in the farther room, the high-bred fair one last mentioned carelessly enquired—

"Have you seen the little mountaineer?"

"What, the new thing?—No; I shall go presently, when I have lost all my money—the men are all in a fuss about her, I find:—what is she like?"

"O, pretty enough; only a little *gauche* — wants forming: — rouges well, but dresses!"—and the shoulders were drawn up in unutterable horror.—

"What, so little dressed"—

"No, no—so *much*."

"Really!—what, expensively?"

"*Very*—carries a whole muslin-warehouse about her"—and she laughed immoderately.

"O, I understand you— L——d! how stupid I am! — come, I grow curious; here, Farren, take my cards."

She then took the arm of her dear *friend*, and begged she would "do the honours of

the little mountaineer"—then, quietly looking her full in the face for a few minutes, passed on, with—"*Pas grand' chose!*"—without even affecting to whisper.—How indeed, should she imagine that a little mountaineer, whom she, as well as her friend, concluded to have no *English*, could possibly understand *French*?—Helena was much less offended by this, than by the familiar applause of the gentlemen; and as soon as the ladies had passed, she ventured to indulge in a dimpled smile, while Frederick, who had also heard the sentence against her,—whispered—

"*Some* thought her face was *not* so *very* fair."

—"For goodness sake keep my poetry to yourself in this meridian."

The young ladies before-mentioned were now standing at a small distance from Helena, and she unavoidably overheard their conversation: they were discussing the merits of a celebrated player on various instruments.

"Pray, my dear,"—enquired one of them,—"does he play on the Æolian harp?"—

Helena was exchanging an arch look with Frederick when a servant announced—"Lady Richmond."

"O," said Mrs. Morley, aside to Mrs. Villiers, "I'll introduce you to her particularly. She is a good-natured creature, and has no fault in the world but that of being a giddy girl a little older than you and me."

She entered, very gracefully; was a fine woman, and most elegantly attired, to the extent of the fashion. Approaching Mrs. Morley, she began—"I beg you ten thousand pardons for being so late; but Sir William took a meat breakfast, and went to the new play, of all things; leaving me with my puppy of a nephew, and three or four more nonsensical fellows that I could not get rid of. One of them would begin drawing my picture;—did you ever hear any thing half so foolish? and they talked so much nonsense, I was obliged fairly to

send them away at last, for I was determined Edward should come."

"Well! I am glad you are here at last," said Mrs. Morley;—then, presenting her by name to Mrs. Villiers, and her daughter, she added, with a flattering regard directed to Frederick, "Mr. Beaumont—a friend of mine also."

Lady Richmond courtesied to them all, with an air of pointed attention; and Helena received these first tokens of what *she* called politeness with one of her most bewitching smiles.

Lady Richmond said, she should be most happy in Mrs. Villiers's acquaintance, and, taking Helena's hand, added that she would sit amongst them, and hoped they should soon understand each other:—then—speaking half-aside to Mrs. Morley, and glancing at Helena,—

"O! she's exquisite! she'll put out half the misses in town."—

Her "puppy of a nephew" now approached: "Come hither, Edward,—let me introduce you." She did so to all her new

friends—by the name of "Mr. Edward Fairford."

He expressed himself "the happiest fellow in the world, to come in for such an introduction;" and enquired of Helena "how long she had enlightened this Hemisphere."

This was so very fine, that it puzzled her—not to comprehend—but to answer—and she looked at Lady Richmond in despair. She, laughing, said—.

"You will soon be used to my nephew's sublimities, my dear:"—and Helena told him she feared his system would want a great deal of illustration to adapt it to the meanness of her capacity.

He was much more apprehensive, he said, that it would be necessary for her to humble her capacity to his.

Mrs. Morley told Lady Richmond that there was a cassino-table waiting for her, and asked Mrs. Villiers if she would join it—to which she agreed immediately.

Mrs. Morley, turning again to Lady Richmond, said, "But you must first cross the room, and relieve that distressed

gentleman (pointing one out), who has been leaning back from his cards these ten minutes at least, inviting you with his eyes to go and hear what he has to say."

Lady Richmond looking at him—" Now, what can he want?—I protest he *beckons* me—did you ever see such impertinence? —but I am a poor daughter of Eve—and so—I go."

" How remarkably well Lady Richmond looks to-night," said Mrs. Morley, addressing Mr. Fairford.

" Yes—she's very well when she's made up." He then took his aunt's place by Helena, began a renewal of his sublimities, and his gallantries—and paid her the most devoted attention.

Before Lady Richmond took her leave, she told Mrs. Villiers, that if she and her charming daughter would pardon the preposterous impropriety of giving her such short notice, they would make her the happiest creature in the universe by accompanying Mrs. Morley to a private ball at her house, on that day se'nnight.

They accepted her apologies, and her invitation. She then turned to Beaumont, whom she had taken various occasions of addressing in the course of the evening—"My dear Sir, where are you to be found?—Sir William shall wait on you, and I will do myself the pleasure of sending you a card for my ball, next week."

Frederick, rising,—bowing,—and acknowledging the honour intended him,—

"Will it be least impertinent to burden your ladyship's memory, or pocket, with my address?"—taking out a card.

"Pocket!—Goth!"—cried the lady—"but give me your card—don't trust my memory for the world—It is not *trust-worthy*, I assure you, for a communication of such importance."—Which being evidently meant for a compliment, Frederick took it—like "a Frenchman"—"made a bow"—smiling internally at the confession that this very important circumstance would not remain in the lady's mind 'till she got home. She then told her nephew she must depart, and could not

possibly stir without his attendance, which he seemed as little solicitous to give at her exit, as he had been at her entrance.—Slowly, however, he arose, and, telling Helena that he should " count the pulses of his watch 'till he saw her again," bade her, most unwillingly, adieu.

When they were gone—" Here is something to keep off *ennui* at least," said Helena, aside to Frederick :—" the other fine people made me sleepy."

" This Mr. Fairford," whispered Frederick, " makes downright love to you, Helena; I find myself growing terribly jealous."

She laughed, saying, " Had you not better spare yourself that trouble 'till he thinks of me?—at present, he seems perfectly contented with *himself*. But do you know it is high time for you to depart—don't you see they are all moving?"

" No, I hope not."—He soon rose, however, very obediently; which, Mrs. Morley observing, detained him to supper,

and Mr. Morley being somewhat more accessible than usual, the evening finished very agreeably.

CHAP. XLI.

SIR William and Lady Richmond were generally allowed to be "people of fashion;"—though they were sometimes seen in the same parties—often travelled together in the summer—now and then conversed together in company—and were once actually found by an intimate friend dining tête-à-tête. There were a few other slight shades over their fashionable fame. Slander herself had never reported that they vented, when alone, the peccant humours which had been suppressed in company; had never even dared to point her finger at the conduct of the lady, nor could prove, to the *satisfaction* of any one, that the gen-

tleman ever reprimanded his steward for paying his debts, when he wanted money himself. Were they, then, a happy couple? —Why, perhaps, happiness is rather too *big* a word for them. They had not been romantically attached from the beginning: their characters were not marked by the highest degrees of refinement; they both loved amusement, and, fortunately, amusement of the same kind; were both hospitable, and good-humoured; and each thought the other, what the rest of the world thought them also,—very elegant and very pleasant.

Lady Richmond told her husband at supper, that she had found a new Cicisbeo —"at least, I intend him that supreme honour—a monstrous handsome creature —I have invited him to the ball: so you must go and make your bow to him in form: there's his card"—throwing it before him;—then, passing on to describe the ladies to whom she had been introduced,—"You'll be over head and ears in love with the little Cambrian, I can tell you."

"Shall I?—do, then, ask them to dinner in the mean time."

(Lady Richmond, staring at him)—"I have not an *hour* of my own between this and the ball:—but don't despair; I will *make* a day for them as soon as I can."

The next morning, she waited on the ladies in Wimpole Street—asked "what she could do for them, and whither she could take them."

Mrs. Villiers, with proper acknowledgments, declined going out—but entrusted her daughter to her;—saying, that, to her, every thing would be new.

Her ladyship was in raptures at the office of shewing London for the first time to her "sweet young friend,"—and not less so at shewing her sweet young friend to London.

It was a beautiful May morning, and the barouche was thrown open.

Lady Richmond gave directions to be driven down Bond Street, and St. James's Street, and back again to the Park.

"You shall see all the fine world to-

gether" — said she:—then, suddenly recollecting herself, went on—" How fortunate!—it is Thursday, and about the Court-hour. I rejoice that I am not there to-day."

When they came to Bond Street, it was full of carriages. Helena was surprised, and amused—but they were obliged to proceed slowly, and the unsparing examinations which she had to undergo from the crowd of loungers, considerably abated her enjoyment. Most of them knew Lady Richmond's carriage, and, in bowing to her ladyship, were naturally attracted to the new star, which they unanimously pronounced to be of the first magnitude.

One of these gentlemen, of a more dignified port, and expressive brow, than the rest, and evidently past the first age of puppyism, approached the carriage,—stopped it — and, in conversing with Lady Richmond, glanced frequently at Helena.

" How came you to be an absentee from Court to-day, my Lord?"—asked the lady.

"I might ask your ladyship the same question."

"Why, I have just been rejoicing that I am away,"—she replied; "because, this young lady, who is but lately come to town, has, as yet, seen nothing, and we shall be just in time for the raree-shew."

My Lord, bowing towards Helena, asked —"May I have the honour of a presentation here?" It was granted;—and Lady Richmond introduced to Helena, Lord Edgeworth. A lower bow, with an expression of deep respect, followed from the gentleman, and a graceful inclination of the head from the lady: but the carriages now pressing from behind, they were obliged to proceed; Lady R. only saying —"You will not forget next Wednesday, my Lord."

"No, *depend* upon it;"—and they soon arrived in St. James's Street; where, fine coaches, fine chairs, fine ladies, fine diamonds, and fine footmen, lined the way.

Lady Richmond explained every thing, and every body. Helena was really gra-

tified by the view of so much beauty, gaiety, and splendour, as for the first time in her life she now beheld.

"What a wonderful place your London is!"—said Helena—"it has been very justly compared, I think, to a hive of bees."

"Not quite so accurately," said Lady R. "for we tolerate *wasps*—which, you know, the bees do not."

"Certainly, your ladyship has justly given it in favour of the bee-hive; and yet, I dare say you will think me, in every possible sense, *tramontane*, when I tell you that I had rather *live* in my own little parent nest in the woods, than in this fine splendid *imitation* of a bee-hive;—where, however, the wasps do not molest me."

"I wish they never may, my dear," said Lady R. "you are a fine subject for them, if there is any truth in a certain proverb I have heard, respecting wasps and fruit."

The animated looks, and pleasant observations of Helena, on all she saw, de-

lighted Lady Richmond. After a drive through the Park, " in which, however," said her ladyship, " there is not much to see to-day, but water and trees :" she took her back to Mrs. Morley's ; and, saying she had fifty things to think of before she could possibly dress for dinner, drove away.

Helena told her mother how well she had been amused, and how much she had wished for her to share the amusement. Mrs. Villiers replied, that her time had been very well employed in contriving further entertainment for her. On the evening of the day following, Macbeth was to be performed, and Mrs. Morley, at her request, had kindly engaged a box for the party. Helena was delighted.

And now arrived a note, announcing the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Falkener,—who were established in a ready furnished house in Weymouth Street.

Mrs. Villiers and her daughter called on Mrs. Falkener the next morning—all parties were rejoiced to meet—Mr. Falkener

cheerily greeted Mrs. Villiers, and told Helena "she had, as yet, lost nothing of her Cambrian bloom." Helena was all smiles and animation—Mrs. Falkener, who was fascinated by a vivacity which formed a concord, though not in unison, with her own character, charged her to let them see her as often as possible. Mr. Falkener joined warmly in the request,—tempted her with the promise of musical parties,—and accidentally mentioned that he should engage a singing-master for his wife. Mrs. Villiers slightly saying she had a wish of the same kind for her daughter, the hint was seized, and Helena was strongly urged to come to Mrs. Falkener's, on the days of the master's attendance, and take her lessons at the same time:—this was readily agreed to, and the party separated in the hope of frequently meeting again.

At dinner, Mr. Morley told Beaumont ... if he was not afraid of taking charge ... many ladies, he would rather be ex- ... joining the party to the play. ... civil proposal, but by

most of the party it was easily forgiven. They arrived at the theatre in good time, and Helena had a few minutes leisure to wonder and admire. The box was near the stage; and Helena, well acquainted with the play, and by sense and feeling prepared to be a true critic of nature, with a beating heart beheld the curtain rise;—and the lights—the company—all was forgotten, except that one of the finest plays in the world, set off by the finest acting in the world, was now, for the first time in her life, to be felt, and enjoyed;—and *that* with the participation of her mother, and —Frederick. He sat immediately behind her; and, as her face turned towards the stage, he could see every impression it took, and—for the present evening, confined all his gratification, both in the play and the performance, to the study of them as reflected from the mirror of her countenance.

When Lady Macbeth read the letter, the eyes of Helena caught their expression from those of the actress. When the

reading, and the soliloquy, were finished, she turned, for a moment, to Frederick—saying—" She told all, before she had uttered a word."

Through all the succeeding scenes of horror, guilt, and remorse, Helena was " rapt, inspired;"—and when the inimitable actress, with the dignity of superior rank, and the grace of elegant hospitality, received her guests at the banquet,—she exclaimed, under a momentary illusion,—" How *can* she hide such crimes under such an exterior?"

The dreadful scene, depicturing that state of remorse which wakes to life and motion, even in the temporary death of sleep, filled her with such horror that she could not steadily behold the fixed, open eye, whose—

" ———sense was shut."

There was one person in the house, besides Frederick, who seemed to derive all his interest and pleasure from the countenance of Helena. This was the noble-

man who had been introduced to her by Lady Richmond. He was in the box adjoining to that of Mrs. Morley. Helena saw him not, for she was lost in the play. Frederick saw him not, for he was lost in Helena; but her mother marked him well, and was hurt at the freedom of his gaze.

When the play was ended, Mrs. Villiers enquired of her daughter whether she had ever before seen the gentleman in the next box, whose eyes had been so intently fixed upon her.

"I have seen no such person, my dear mother;—I have seen nothing—but Mrs. Siddons—or rather Lady Macbeth."

Mrs. Villiers whispered her where she might see him. Her eye now met his, but was instantly, and in some confusion, withdrawn. She then informed her mother who he was, and on what occasion she had seen him. Frederick now began to make the same observations,—asked the same question, and obtained the same replies.

Helena was for some time *untuned* for the farce; but,—it was all novelty, and

soon won her attention, and restored to her features and conversation, their native character. When the curtain dropped, Lord Edgeworth, who was in a distant part of the box, took the first possible opportunity of approaching nearer to Helena, and respectfully bowing, told her, that he presumed on the privilege of Lady Richmond's introduction, to ask her how she had been entertained. Helena, with some reserve, but with an animation which she could not wholly restrain, briefly expressed her opinion of the play, and the performance. He then talked again of Lady Richmond,—as it seemed, by way of forming an excuse for a longer conversation, which, on his side, had gradually taken a gallant, and complimentary turn.

Frederick, who had vanished in search of the carriage, returned to the box, and some very animated expressions of admiration now reaching his ears, he turned his eyes towards the speaker, and beheld still more of animation in his countenance. He ventured to interrupt the noble Lord;

coldly saying, that the carriage was ready. Lord Edgeworth bowed, and returned to his own party.

When the ladies were in the carriage, Frederick seated himself by the side of Helena, and, for the first five minutes, spoke not a word. At last, observing that the elder ladies were engaged in discussing the play, he whispered Helena,

"That gentleman seemed to have a great many fine things to say to you."

"Yes, many more than I liked: they afforded me no sort of amusement, I assure you."

He then smiled complacently, and asked with the tender anxiety which was usual with him,—

"Are you not fatigued, my Helena?"—

"I was not 'till I became alarmed at the crowd and confusion of leaving the house."

The conversation became general, and they soon reached Mr. Morley's house, where Frederick took his leave.

CHAP. XLII.

The next morning, Mrs. Morley, on meeting her friends in the breakfast-room, before the appearance of her husband, said she would endeavour to make interest for the carriage;—" and if you approve it," said she, " we will call on Lady Richmond; for her visit was to you. It is ten to one against our success to-day,"—she added, smiling,—" but I will begin to talk about the carriage this morning, and then, perhaps, in about three days more, we may have a chance of catching it."

Scene, Breakfast :—Mr. Morley *reading the Newspaper.*

Mrs. Morley. " Do you use the carriage this morning, Mr. Morley?"

Mr. Morley. " I don't know."

A pause—

Mrs. Morley to Mrs. Villiers.—" I think it quite time to return Lady Rich-

mond's visit."—Mrs. Villiers assented with a bow.

Mrs. Morley. "It's a fine morning for the Park:—I think it was nearly deserted, Helena, when you were there with Lady Richmond, was it not?"

"It was indeed, Ma'am;—every body was in the palace, or about the palace."

Mr. Morley—laying down the paper, and sipping his tea. "I must go into the city this morning: stocks are fallen, I see; and I want to buy."

Mrs. Morley. "Then, perhaps, you will go early, Mr. Morley; and we can afterwards go as far as Lady Richmond's: we can hardly go too late for her."

Mr. Morley. "Aye."

With this most gracious, and polite permission they were obliged to be content.—Helena went in the mean time, to Mrs. Falkener's; and Frederick, who called in an hour after, followed her thither.

When he entered, Mr. Falkener was playing a very tender Welsh air, with his

eyes fixed on Helena, who was carelessly turning over a new book of songs. When the air was over, Helena began to lament that she should not be able to dance at Lady Richmond's ball; for that she did not know one of the new figures; "and I suppose the Marquis's *exquisite* steps are out of all fashion by this time."

"Oh!"—said Mr. Falkener, "we will teach you half a dozen figures in a minute."—

They all stood up, and placing some chairs to increase their set, Mr. Falkener caught the hand of Helena, and said, she must be his partner; Frederick coloured, and took Mrs. Falkener's.

They went through several figures, and Helena was soon pronounced to be *au fait* of a London country dance; as to her steps, her teachers were no less unanimous that they were perfectly elegant, nor was a doubt entertained by any one of the company, except herself, but that she would be the best dancer in the room. She smiled at these partial decisions, and said gaily—

"I must now make one of the Marquis's best courtesies for your instructions, and depart; or the ladies will be waiting for me, to accompany them on a visit."—

She was just in time for them; and when they arrived at Lady Richmond's, they were informed she was at home.

"That I did not expect"—said Mrs. Morley, smiling. Lady Richmond did not expect it herself, and was in raptures that she had been prevented from going out.

"Now sit down," said she—"and you shall not leave me these three hundred years:"—then—to her servant—"I am not at home to a human being:—whoever comes, I charge you—don't *produce me*.—And now, my dear creatures, what have you been about since I saw you?"

They began to describe the particulars of the play.

"O yes, I heard of that—I have seen Edgeworth, and he told me all about it. He's going mad for your daughter, Mrs. Villiers, I do verily believe, so look to it."

—then half-aside,—" I wish it *may* be so! —a prodigious estate—not much encumbered—brilliant establishment!"

She then began to plan future meetings. "Have you been to the Opera?"—

They had not.—

"Why, then, you must promise me, and moreover promise not to forget that promise, that you will all dine with us on Saturday in next week, and help to crowd my box."

This was agreed to—" and observe"—(to Mrs. Villiers)—" let that beautiful Beaumont keep himself for me too: for Sir William will send him an invitation: they have exchanged cards I know."

A tremendous rap made Helena start. Lady Richmond laughed at her—telling her she would " soon get the better of all that:—there's Lady ———, I dare say; and I know she *particularly* wants to see me this morning: but I will set up a statue to my man, if he keeps her off."

He earned his statue—and sent up her card.

"Any other day, she should have been welcome—but this hour is your's—and *Friendship's*."

Mrs. Villiers bit her lip. At last, the hours and the moments being all run out, the visitors took their leave, and Lady Richmond's last words were—

"Remember—Wednesday, and Saturday, are for me."

"What a good-humoured, thoughtless thing it is!"—said Mrs. Villiers.

Helena dearly loved vivacity, but was a little overpowered by that of Lady Richmond; and they all enjoyed the repose of a drive through the Park, and a few turns in Kensington Gardens; with which Helena was more pleased than with any thing she had seen since she had left her native mountains.

In the evening, Frederick came in; having received a general invitation to the house from Mr. Morley;—who, however, one day asked his wife "how long Mrs. Villiers intended to let young Beaumont dangle after her daughter?" adding—

"I knew a good deal of Beaumont in India, and can answer for him that he is not such a fool as to slave there all his life, and then let his son marry a girl without a shilling."—

Mrs. Morley gave no opinion at all.

In the course of the evening, Mrs. Morley spoke of the chapel they were to attend on the approaching Sunday. Beaumont sued for permission to accompany them.

"It 's a permission for which I am not often solicited by a young man of fashion," said Mrs. Morley, "and I shall be particularly happy in your company."

Frederick was punctual—and they all attended —— Chapel. On their return home, Helena said—with the greatest simplicity—

"I could not help thinking of Mr. Melcombe, all church-time, Mamma."

"Upon my word," said Mrs. Morley, laughing, "Mr. Melcombe is very highly honoured, Helena."

"I mean that he reads and preaches so

impressively—so like a father among his children."

"This was a good sermon," said Mrs. Villiers, "as to its intention, and even some of its arguments; but, I must confess, I thought it rather prolix."

"But then," said Frederick, looking very gravely, "you must consider—he had a very difficult point to prove."

"What was that?" enquired Mr. Morley, who had not been with them.

"The certainty of death."

"Your are a mischievous fellow, after all," said Mrs. Morley; "if going to church is to make you satirical, I will not take you there any more."

CHAP. XLIII.

THE great, the gay, the important Wednesday arrived. Frederick was invited to dine at Mr. Morley's, and accompany the party to Lady Richmond's ball. The first of hair-dressers, and the first of dress-makers, were employed, at Mrs. Villiers's desire, to adorn her Helena: and she was as simply elegant, as a drapery of white crape over her graceful figure, and a band of pearls round her auburn tresses, could make her.

When the party arrived at Lady Richmond's, the rooms were not yet filled:—they had every decoration that taste could confer; and Lady Richmond, whose high spirits were chastened by the presence of so large a company, and the pleasing anxieties of an hostess, appeared with peculiar advantage. She was, in truth, a most engaging woman; and had, moreover, a constant, and generous solicitude that other

engaging women should be flattered and admired, as well as herself. She received Mrs. Morley's party with marked politeness, and presented them to her husband; who paid his devoirs most courteously to them all; and, at the sight of Helena, could scarcely forbear from starting. Just before the dancing began, Lady Richmond enquired of Helena whether she was engaged. She was.

"Then you must positively promise me to take Mr. Fairford for the two following dances, or, I assure you, he will never forgive me: he will be here in a moment, to plead for himself."—Helena bowed assent.

"And who is the *happy man* now?"—asked Lady Richmond.

"Mr. Beaumont," said Helena, without hesitation.

Lady Richmond smiled,—and was now leading her towards the titled ladies, in the intention of placing her immediately below them, under the style and title, as she pleasantly said, of "Queen of the misses." Helena, however, entreated permission to

stand in the lower ranks—alleging that she was sufficiently panic-stricken already. Lady Richmond rallied her alarms, but indulged her with the choice of her own station.

"I believe," said she, "I must keep up your spirits by shewing you something to laugh at. Look towards that door, and you will see, just entering, two originals, —whom I fly to receive, and, in three minutes, will return, and tell you who they are."

Lady Richmond was gone in a moment, when Helena suddenly whispered to Frederick,—

"Why, they are positively nothing less than the Marquis and Marchioness de Sanspareil, of whom you have heard so much."

"What, your dancing-master and Miss Angle!—where—O where are they?"

Lady Richmond soon returned, when Helena, thoughtless of the fatal consequences to the Marquis's fame,—saved her the trouble of all further explanation, by

disclosing what she already knew of their history.

"Is it possible," asked her Ladyship, "that he ever condescended to be your *maitre à danser?* Why he is now at the height of the haut-ton, and, were he to know that I am acquainted with what you have now been telling me, would certainly expire on the spot." Helena looked alarmed—Lady Richmond continued:—"I am resolved to have a little mischief with him, and insist upon his recollecting you, which, I engage for it, he will find a very difficult task. All his fine speeches to Miss Angle have been lost and forgotten these hundred years, and they now hate one another most authentically. I protest I will go this moment and hint your name to him."

Vain were the remonstrances of Helena against this project; for, in the midst of them, her Ladyship had again flown away.

"The Queen of the misses" now gave all her attention to the dance; anxiously watched the figure, and, by the time she had reached the top of the room, had col-

lected a tolerable proportion of courage. In a little time, the enlivening tones of the harp, the careless ease with which her companions were seen to bound along, the encouraging looks of Frederick, and the inspiring effect of his presence, gradually dispelled her apprehensions. As her spirits rose, her native graces awoke, and modesty and pleasure disputed the blushes on her cheeks.

Frederick was himself a most accomplished dancer; his form was of exquisite proportion; and while his exalted air and stature commanded universal attention, the sweetness and gaiety of his countenance attracted, and charmed it. He was all soul, and appeared to dance on air. With such a combination of advantages, it will not be wondered at that the eyes of the greater part of the company were irresistibly drawn towards them both.

Lady Richmond, in the mean time, sought out the Marquis. It was not a tedious search; for, diminutive as was his figure, his *graces* and *eloquence* effectually

prevented the possibility of its remaining unnoticed, and, accordingly, wherever he moved, he had a little train of observers if not of admirers. His lady, in the mean time, persevered in the air *languissant* which had formerly been so highly celebrated by this most exquisite of human exotics, and which she was, now unconsciously, offering to the *ridicule* of three or four first rate military quizzers, who were wickedly extolling her perfections with a gravity which was perfectly understood by each other.

"My dear Marquis," said Lady Richmond, decoying him towards Mrs. Villiers, —"don't you know something of Mrs. and Miss Villiers?"

"Villiers! Villiers! Ah! *ma chere dame*, I tink I did see dem vonce,—but it vas great vile 'go, and I can 'ardly tell if I did see dem or no. But—how lofely you do look to-night! I 'ope you vil *danser tout à l'heure*. Ah! if I could have de honneur to danse vid you!"

"O no," said Lady Richmond, "I have

too many *cares* upon my mind; besides, nobody dances, *now*, but children:—there, that is Mrs. Villiers: I am sure you know her, and am positive that I have heard Miss Villiers speak of you."

He was now very near Mrs. Villiers; and, her notice having been attracted by these last words, she perceived the Marquis advancing, and, with a lurking smile, made a slight bow. That of the Marquis was still more slight,—and again he began to flatter Lady Richmond.

"*Who is* that *Grace?*" said a very elegant man to his next neighbour, with his eyes on Helena.

"Euphrosyne, by Jupiter," answered the other—"but her earthly name I know not;—I will enquire it of Lady Richmond."

He did so, and again it was circulated, *pianissimo*, round the room, and, with it, the account of her parentage and native abode. And now, those very fine misses who had honoured her with their notice, and several others in *their set*, were "shorn

of their beams." It was in vain that still they struggled to keep up the appellation of "the little mountaineer;"—they were obliged to whisper it to each other; for the men were in a greater *fuss* than ever, and nothing was looked at, talked of, thought of, but—"The fair Cambrian."

The Marquis had taken the first possible opportunity of escaping from Mrs. Villiers, but,—he now heard in every corner of the room, the rapturous approbation which was bestowed upon her daughter. Much of this was attracted by her dancing, and the Marquis gave it unbounded credit for the whole.—Vanity and pride maintained a momentary struggle, but vanity carried the day, and he yielded to the irresistible tempt-ation of whispering to each of his ac-quaintance, that Miss Villiers's exquisite dancing originated in his instructions,—qualifying, however, the humiliating avowal, by assuring his friends,—that "she vas—O—soche a sweet child!—and he did teach her for his amusement."

He now found it would be proper to have a

sudden and ecstatic recollection both of Mrs. Villiers and her daughter;—and instantly advancing to the former, was just imploring ten tousand pardons for his "*mechante memoire*" when Helena approached, and obtained her due share of recollection, transport, and adoration.

"Now—might he but danse vid her vonce more, he should be *le plus heureux des hommes*."

But Helena, besides that she was really engaged, coveted not any share of the universal attention which was challenged by the deportment of the Marquis, and politely declined this dazzling pre-eminence.

Scarcely had she seated herself by the side of her mother, who, with looks of delight, congratulated her on her *coup d'essai*, when Mr. Fairford approached, with an anxious enquiry whether Lady Richmond had proved a faithful, and successful advocate for him, and assuring her that nothing but the intoxicating transport of drinking her health, again and again, could have

detained him from attending her sooner, to supplicate for himself.

Helena, not a little diverted by this whimsical confusion of truth and flattery, admitted that her Ladyship had engaged her to go down the two next dances with him.

"What a forgiving angel must you be!" said he—"for, I assure you, I feel excruciated with remorse at not being here before you."

All this part was performed standing; for Mamma on one side, and Beaumont on the other, precluded all possibility of a nearer approach. He offered to procure refreshments for her; to which she consented, and Frederick, apprehensive of losing his place by her side, silently permitted this invasion of his rights.

No sooner had Mr. Fairford retreated, than Lord Edgeworth approached, with a bow of reverence, which put all other bows to shame. Frederick "glour'd as he had seen a warlock"—My Lord looked to the right, and looked to the left—but no hope

appeared of obtaining a seat by her side. Whether as he looked at Frederick, he thought, like Sir Lucius O'Trigger, that —"there was a probability of succeeding about that fellow which was mighty provoking," or, whether he remembered his haughty bow to him at the play-house, or both, certain it is that his Lordship cast towards him glances of no courteous kind; while the eye of Frederick, measuring his altitude, tended not to render them more so. My Lord, however, was not to be discouraged from addressing Miss Villiers; and, after a few passing enquiries, and allusions to their interview at the play, solicited the honour of her hand, for the two next dances. She bowed, but,—was engaged.

"The two following, then?"—and he put softness into his voice, and dispersed the frown from his brow. Helena hesitated.—She was not without a lurking hope of again dancing with Frederick:—she had, moreover, watched the barometer of his spirits, at the play, and seen it fall: yet, she was not engaged; and there was

a—something in Lord Edgeworth's looks and manner that subdued her;—she therefore, though with evident reluctance, gave the promise.

He smiled triumphantly; and observing that he had not yet spoken to Lady Richmond, for the present took his leave.

Frederick was very silent, and very gloomy;—when Lady Richmond appeared; and coming immediately up to him—

"Mr. Beaumont," said she, "you must now permit *me* to introduce you to a partner."

To refuse was impossible, and he was led off, to be presented to—Lady Louisa Sackville. She was the sister of his friend—she must, therefore, be particularly attended to—worse and worse!—As he walked on, however, he enquired whether it would be incorrect to dance twice with one lady in the course of the evening?—

Lady Richmond, with an arch glance from her bright eyes, said, smilingly,

"Why it is against the canon laws; but, as I am Pope for the night, I am gra-

ciously pleased, for once, to 'grant you ab-'solution.'"

"Then," said he, "I am safe:"—and, eagerly returning to engage Helena for "the next after the two next dances," he found that his Lordship had seated himself by Helena's side.

Frederick, however, still approaching her, made his request on the authority of Lady Richmond. Helena promised, but, seeing him again look haughtily on Lord Edgeworth, she became uneasy; and, the more so, as she had not a moment for consideration what to do, Frederick being under the necessity of immediately attending Lady Richmond, who was waiting for him. Helena bade him stop one instant—saying,—

"I have a message to send to her,"—then, rising, she whispered him smiling,—"Do not forget your *talisman*;" alluding to those few poetical lines of her's which he had so named. He looked at her like the sun through a storm—and emphatically saying—"Never"—walked lightly away;

then begging ten million pardons of Lady Richmond, informed her that he was now quite ready to attend his partner.

On his introduction, he enquired after his friend,—spoke of him and of other subjects, with warmth and animation; and, when he met Helena in the dance, gave her a look, and caught another in return, which served him to live upon 'till he joined her again. They also exchanged a smile at the expense of the Marquis, who having prevailed on a *full-grown* lady to give him an opportunity of exhibiting himself, was engaged in a serio-comic display of the science of dancing. His head thrown back, and his eyes thrown down, he resembled nothing that had been seen *in a room* before; and brought before the view of the wondering spectators, the whimsical distortions of the well-known, for ever lost, and for-ever-to-be-regretted—Didelot,—of operatical memory. The lady, his partner, being not only of Patagonian dimensions, but, in her air, movements, and countenance, of that gentle order of fe-

males which the other sex have distinguished by the general description of "still life," presented a contrast to this Lilliputian hero, which would have disordered the muscles of Diogenes himself.

During the two following dances, Beaumont sat chatting with Mrs. Villiers, while Helena went through her engagement with Lord Edgeworth; who, immediately on quitting her, went in search of Lady Richmond, to endeavour to procure to himself the same indulgence which had been accorded to Mr. Beaumont. He obtained permission to solicit the consent of Helena, but, when solicited, she decidedly replied, that, after the two ensuing dances, she should dance no more.

Lord Edgeworth looked not disappointed only, but offended. Frederick led Helena to her place, and when the two dances were ended, they once more seated themselves by Mrs. Villiers, hoping to experience no farther interruption from the awful Lord. When supper was announced, however, he was again in attendance on

Helena, urging a request for the honour of sitting "on *one* side of her at supper."

He took care to secure to himself that honour;—and, a moment afterward, Mr. Fairford drew near;—but, finding her doubly guarded, bewailed himself as "the most unfortunate of mankind!"—which he said was solely owing to his over-abundant attention to the laws of politeness, and the commands of Lady Richmond.

"But 'pon honour, if I am always to be jockied in this manner, I will not promise to be either polite or obedient again as long as I exist."

"He will *forget it all* in a quarter of an hour,"—said Helena, laughing, and seating herself by Frederick, with, to her great regret, Lord Edgeworth on the other side. If any thing could *increase* the *impossibility* of his Lordship's making a favourable impression upon the heart of Helena, it was the present state of his feelings, and his consequent manners. His attentions, his eloquence, and the softness of his addresses, were all over

clouded by the sight, and sound of Frederick Beaumont, practising the like devotions, with happier success: so that, his Lordship's countenance presented a most unattractive struggle, between smiles and frowns; and, the *tout ensemble* produced upon Helena a still more unfortunate effect, by the uneasiness and discontent which she felt that it was occasioning to Frederick, as well as by interrupting what little conversation she might have held with him, during the repast.

When the dancing re-commenced, my Lord again solicited, and was again refused —as were, necessarily, many other candidates for the same honour.

When they were preparing to depart, her noble persecutor again appeared, and (while Beaumont took charge of Mrs. Villiers,) claimed the privilege of handing her down stairs, and, as he assisted her into the carriage, ventured to press her hand. The presence of Mrs. Morley prevented Frederick from expressing his feelings respecting the interruptions he had

endured from his Lordship; but, he consoled himself with a resolution to vent his vexation to Helena in the morning. In the morning he came, but had first to unbosom himself of a still deeper affliction, of which, notwithstanding his *talisman*, he could not help feeling that the attentions of Lord Edgeworth were a considerable aggravation.

"I have received a letter from my Mentor"—said he, with a rueful look.

"I hope nothing is the matter in that quarter," said Helena.

"Nothing is the matter with *him*, my Helena, but a great deal with me;—such a string of wise reasons why I should go to Oxford without delay! and, as if that were not misery enough, I am to leave you to the solicitations, and persecutions, which I see, and know, are to proceed from this haughty Lord!"

"Pshaw!—Frederick!—this is nothing but the simple fancy by which you are haunted that every body must be seein g with your eyes,—but, be it as you appre-

hend,—what is Lord Edgeworth to me? what his attentions, his titles, or his wealth? I shall really be angry with you. Do you not yet know, Ingrate! where my heart is?—what then are you afraid of?"

"Shadows, Helena, where you are concerned."

"Be not *superstitious*, Frederick."

"No,—I am only ideotic—but I *will* be very wise;—yet, I like not this banishment,—nor will I enter upon it 'till after Saturday; for I have an invitation to meet you all at Sir William Richmond's, and join your party to the opera."

"Well then, do so—but,—when that is over, indeed Frederick——" and then entered Mr. Fairford.

After the most solicitous enquiries how the ladies had supported their fatigues, he began to bewail his hard fate on the preceding evening,—"and here, by Heaven! am I distanced again!—Upon my soul, Mr. Beaumont, you are confoundedly in the way. You give us poor modest fellows no chance in the world!"

Frederick could not avoid laughing at this harmless raillery, as he believed it to be, satisfying himself, that "*this* puppy, at least, had no particular meaning."

The elder ladies now entered, and the conversation became general. Mr. Fairford, at length, departed; assuring Helena that "Time would creep with him" 'till Saturday.

The next morning, Helena visited Mrs. Falkener, and being, as it chanced, in one of her gayest and most engaging moods, amused herself, and her friends, with her account of the ball. As she left the room, Mr. Falkener passionately exclaimed,—"What a fascinating creature!"

Helena heard it not, but his wife did;—nor was it the first exclamation of the same kind, that had met her ear from her husband's lips.—"She is indeed!"—replied Mrs. Falkener—but her heart sunk while she spoke.

CHAP. XLIV.

On the day appointed by Lady Richmond for the dinner, and the opera, the expected party assembled, by her Ladyship's desire, at an early hour, in order, as she said, that *her* "sweet novice, (however *barbarous* she must consequently be deemed herself,) should see the whole of the opera."

There were, besides the party from Mr. Morley's, (which included Frederick,) Lord Edgeworth, Mr. Edward Fairford, a young lady, (his relation,) and his mother, Lady Richmond's sister; elder by many years, and of dissimilar, but very pleasing manners—a lady, liking the world, as Lady Grace expresses it, *soberly*, and possessing a mind fraught with good sense, and good nature.

When the party entered the dining-room, Lady Richmond ordered her nephew to the head of the table, telling him that "he must take all the slavery." Then,

placing herself next to Mr. Beaumont, she stationed Lord Edgeworth on the opposite side, with a charge to take care of Mrs. and Miss Villiers. He sat between them. Sir William had placed Helena at his own right hand, saying—

" Her Ladyship may marshal her gentlemen as she pleases; but, as for *you*, fair lady, I shall, for one day, at least, keep you to myself. You were so besieged by hosts of adorers at the ball, that it was impossible for an unfortunate Benedict like me, to come within eye-shot of you."

" Do you call that a misfortune?" said his nephew—" i' faith, it 's the only chance of escaping the fire, I promise you."

" 'Pon honour,"—said Sir William—" Ned blushes, and looks modest."

Ned tried to divert the conversation into the channel in which it usually ran, where he called himself at home.

" My dear Lady Richmond, what is this?"—asked he, turning over a fricasee with a fork—it 's a d——sh queer looking thing;—I don't think your master of the

roast has put forth all the powers of his genius to-day; however" — sipping his soup, with a considerate aspect,—" I must pronounce this to be a very well projected soup."

He proceeded not only to criticise whatever was near him, but, to descant, with the most profound, and elaborate skill, on the whole science of concocting the luxuries of the table—'till Sir William chanced to put a question to him relative to a *particular friend*, which, for a while, attracted his eloquence to that less interesting topic;—and he discussed it with a frankness, on which the presense of the attendants was no restraint whatever.

" What is become of your friend, Ranger, Ned?"—asked Sir William.

" Done up, Sir!" answered he, carelessly—" completely done up, a fortnight ago:"—then, with mimic pathos in his voice,—

> " I pass'd this very morning by his doors,
> And found them guarded———."

Helena shuddered, and looked involuntarily towards Frederick, with whom she had lately read the scene alluded to, and sickened at the application thus made by modern friendship.

"Why, he has got through his fortune very diligently," said Sir William;—"I don't think it is above two years since he was married, and his wife, I believe, threw several thousands into the stock."

"O yes, Sir—he was a spirited fellow—he has been galloping down hill this twelvemonth, and at last has got a tumble. His father was a miser—and Frank 's a spendthrift, and came upon us like a great thaw after a hard frost."

"I can't imagine," said the young lady pertly, to Mrs. Fairford—"how they contrived to spend such amazing sums, for they made mighty little appearance with it all."

"I don't know, indeed" answered Mrs. Fairford, "and as they did not ask me to pay their debts, I never enquired."

"Come, enough of this," said Lady

Richmond, catching her sister's hint—"Lord Edgeworth, you do not take care of Mrs. Villiers."

The reproof was a rash one, for his Lordship had been shewing her the most profound attention; but, it had been diverted awhile by the late discussion.

Sir William here chancing to cast his eye upon his wife, smilingly said—

"Lady Richmond, your hair-dresser's genius, as Fairford says, has not been in full force to-day."

"I beg your pardon, Sir William,"—interrupted Lady Richmond,—"but I must tell you a characteristic anecdote of said hair-dresser. Having heard that my carriage broke down last night, his only anxiety, this morning, was to know whether the accident had not discomposed my hair."

"Tenderest of friseurs!"—said Sir William,—"he could not endure that a hair of your head should be injured. He did wonders, however, on the night of the ball; and, upon my word, Mrs. Fairford, I thought she was looking as well as I ever——"

"Silence, monster!" cried her Ladyship; "now that is just as much as to say that there was a time when my looks were, upon the whole, better than they are at present; it *insinuates* that I *have* been younger;—a suspicion not to be borne:—I never *will* count my age by any thing but my wrinkles, —and 'till they *do* come, I don't chuse to be of any age whatever."

"You are perfectly right,"—said Sir William, "especially while you have so many attendant slaves to perplex the calculation for you. I assure you, Miss Villiers, her levees of loungers are much more crowded than mine;—there are three or four of them that never ask for me at all. I accidentally overheard one of them from my study, the other day, enquiring—'Is 'your lady at home?'—'No, Sir.'—'O, 'very well—say I called—my compliments 'to your master'—and away he went."

"*Point de merveille*"—said Helena,— "not that they desert you, but, that they are attracted by Lady Richmond;—I assure you *I* find her a perfect magnet."

The soft accents of Helena reached not the ear of Lady Richmond; but, in reply to the *badinage* of Sir William, her Ladyship fairly acknowledged that he was a very polite husband.

When the ladies withdrew, Lady Richmond took Helena into a back drawing-room, telling her that she had something very serious to say to her. Helena waited in some curiosity to know what could have made Lady Richmond serious. When she thus began:—

"I have a commission, my dear little girl, from a gentleman of my particular acquaintance, to plead in his behalf for nothing less than your gracious permission, and Mrs. Villiers's, to lay his heart, and curricle, at your feet. Can you guess who it is?"

Helena professed that she could not—yet, at the same time, felt a lurking apprehension that it might be Lord Edgeworth.

"Why," resumed Lady Richmond,—"you have shot flying, a bird that 'till now

was ever on the wing;—in short, it is—it is—bonâ-fide, my own thoughtless nephew; such, I must confess, he has hitherto been; but I assure you that, though a coxcomb, he is wanting neither in sense, nor good temper. He has a handsome fortune, and Sir William and I, and all of us, are so delighted at his choice, that I joyfully undertook to prepare the way for him; for his love has really made him so bashful, that he did not dare make his *debut in propriâ personâ.* Believe me, I had no suspicion of this, when I expressed my good wishes for the success of Lord Edgeworth."

Helena was in such amaze, that it was some time before she could recover the use of speech. When she did, she gave Lady Richmond every possible assurance of the pride and satisfaction with which she found herself so high in the good opinion of her Ladyship and Sir William;—she was not less obliged by Mr. Fairford's preference, &c. &c.—but,—the thing was impossible, —and, she alleged all the civil objections

which she could conveniently assemble, at a moment's warning. Lady Richmond looked very truly disappointed—and enquired whether her answer was decisive.

Helena said, "Absolutely so."

"Oh! thou mischievous thing!"—said Lady Richmond—"I do strangely suspect that little heart of having gone astray already."

Helena looked sufficiently guilty, but could not be brought to full confession;—and begged that they might return to the company.

When the gentlemen came in, Frederick, approaching Helena, began to rejoice in finding himself near her once more. He took a seat beside her, and throwing his arm carelessly over her chair, proceeded to admire the unusual glow of her complexion in a higher strain of compliment than he had ever adopted in company before. She regarded him with astonishment, and discovered from the heightened glow of *his* complexion, and the increased brilliancy of his eyes, that

he had taken *at least*, one glass more than usual. She was extremely alarmed, and whispered in an almost trembling voice—“ What *have* you been doing ?”—

“ Nothing, my sweet girl, but indulging a little in the ‘ intoxicating transport,’ as Mr. Fairford says, of drinking your health. — ‘ I am na fou, but just had ‘ plenty.’ ”

Helena looked so grave, and so distressed, that Frederick recollected himself in a moment. The idea that he had wounded her feelings restored to him some portion of his sobriety, and he determined to keep himself as quiet and silent as possible for the remainder of the evening.

When the carriages were announced, Mr. Fairford, advancing towards Helena, with more deference of manner than he had ever shewn to any woman before, solicited the honour of handing her down stairs. From a certain consciousness that appeared in her looks, he plainly perceived that his aunt had opened the cause ; but in what manner it had been received. the

native sweetness of Helena's manner, but little abated by a reserve which he thought equivocal, allowed him not to discover.

Lord Edgeworth escorted Lady Richmond; and when all were seated in the box, in the front of which her Ladyship placed Mrs. and Miss Villiers, there was not a possibility, among so *many ladies*, for any one of the *gentlemen* to make his way to Helena. She was dazzled and delighted at the brilliancy, and beauty, by which she was surrounded, and charmed with the combination of harmonious sounds produced by one of the finest bands, and several of the first singers in the world:—but, her anxiety at the situation of Frederick was a considerable allay to her evening's amusement, and she listened repeatedly to catch the few words that occasionally escaped him. These, however, he so carefully guarded, that she now hoped she had been too easily alarmed, and that no one else would discover the mortifying circumstance which had been so evident to herself. When all was over, however, Lord

Edgeworth, and Beaumont, having handed the elder ladies out of the box, both, at the same moment, eagerly returned, to offer their assistance to Helena; and, as they were advancing with this intent, violently jostled each other in the door-way. Both started back—and Frederick, with more than his usual warmth, said—

"There is not space for both, my Lord; nor is there any necessity for your Lordship's having any trouble whatever."

"Sir,"—replied Lord Edgeworth,—"there can only be *honour* in attending Miss Villiers; and it is an honour which you seem extremely solicitous to engross."

"My Lord," returned Frederick, the lightning kindling in his eye—"I know not that I am answerable to *you* for any part of my conduct respecting Miss Villiers."

The other ladies, who had waited for Helena, now began to tremble; and she was herself terrified, for some moments, beyond the power of speech. At length—gasping for breath, she exclaimed—

"For Heaven's sake, Gentlemen, be not so hasty—I will give a hand to each."

At that moment, it chanced that Col. Trelawney was passing through the crowd, and immediately recollecting Mrs. Villiers, stopped to address her.

She instantly whispered to him an earnest petition that he would stay with them, and prevent a quarrel,—adding, that Lord Edgeworth and Mr. Beaumont were warmly disputing the privilege of handing her daughter out of the box.

Col. Trelawney knew Lord Edgeworth well, and instantly diverted his attention, by engaging him in conversation; then, turning to Helena, of whom he had some recollection, and affected to have a great deal more, he smilingly took possession of her hand, saying, that "he rejoiced to see her," and that "he must, for once, run away with her from the young men, and escort her to her carriage."

Lady Richmond, at the same moment, took the arm of Lord Edgeworth,—saying,

"Come, my Lord, do not *you* desert

me—don't you see that I am left to my own protection ?"

Frederick then peaceably took charge of Mrs. Villiers, and the whole party reached the carriages without further disturbance.

When Mrs. Morley and her friends arrived in Wimpole Street, and were leaving the carriage, Helena, leaning on the arm of Frederick, was slowly, and tremulously following Mrs. Morley, when she heard a faint cry from a female voice. She instantly stopped,—saying—

" Did not some one call ?"—At the same moment, the footman's flambeau threw its light on a feeble emaciated figure staggering, by the support of the railing, towards the steps of the door. The man pushed her away—saying—

" Stand back, and let the lady pass."

Frederick reproved him for his inhumanity, while Helena stood fixed in a gaze of pity on the countenance of the woman, and was just about to ask her what assistance she required, when she pressed her wasted hands together, and exclaimed—" Some

bread, for mercy!—I have not tasted food these two days."

Helena rushed by her into the hall, and entreated Mrs. Morley to stop for an instant—"Look," said she, "on this poor starving creature."

The unhappy object was now sinking on the steps, and Frederick, who, in a moment, had recovered all his recollection, tenderly supported her, and without further consideration of ceremony, carried her into the hall, and placed her on a chair; at the same time, whispering an order to the servants, that the carriage should remain in waiting.

Mrs. Morley, in the mean time, had ordered some food to be brought for her, and a glass of wine. Helena administered both with her own hands, and with the utmost possible precaution.

Marian had flown to the spot at the first rumour of distress. "Here, Marian," said Helena, "support the poor creature's head, while I give her a little more wine."

At the name of Marian, the poor woman

heaved a deep sigh, and raising her eyes, fixed them steadily on those of the girl, which were very remarkable, from being over-arched with dark brows, of a very peculiar form.

"Tell me," exclaimed the poor woman, still regarding her—and—now panting for breath—"tell me—I beseech you—how old are you?"

"Sixteen"—replied Marian.

At the sound of her voice she started. —"Does she live with you, Madam?"—addressing Helena.

Helena replied in the affirmative.

"And when—and where—dear Madam tell me—where did you meet with her?"

"I found her, poor thing!—deserted by gipsies."

The woman now gazed wildly on Helena, who thus continued:—"She remembered to have once had another mother, who was kind to her, and often called her—'My poor Marian.'"

"She is mine," cried the woman with a shriek—and fell back without life or mo-

tion. Deep was the interest with which this scene affected the whole party. Marian tenderly sustaining her fainting mother, wept, and sobbed in agony, and Helena was scarcely less agitated than herself. At length the poor exhausted creature revived, and shed floods of tears on the neck of her daughter, who was now kneeling before her.

After some minutes—

" For Heaven's sake," cried the poor girl—" take a little more sustenance," again offering her what had been brought for her.—

" Oh! I want nothing more in this world," said her mother. But the ladies united their entreaties, and the poor Marian reiterated her simple, but ardent, supplications—crying,—" Pray do I implore you,—live to thank these angel ladies who have done every thing for me."

" God will reward them!—I never can! —never, never, never!"

The kind heart of Mrs. Morley, sighed to lodge the unhappy stranger for the

night;—but her husband, who was not of their party, had long since retired to rest, and she was at a loss how to act.—

The poor woman now declared herself so much refreshed, that she doubted not of being able to walk home, if the ladies would have the kindness to let one of the servants assist her.—Mrs. Morley enquired where she lived.—She shook her head, and sighed.—

"At a miserable lodging, Madam;"—and she described it's situation in Marylebone. Frederick then whispered Mrs. Morley—

"I took the liberty, Madam, of desiring that the carriage might not drive away."—

"It was well thought of," said Mrs. Morley; "let her be put into it, and taken carefully home."—Frederick declared that he would himself conduct her thither.—She was clean, though clothed in the coarsest attire, and at the point of starving.—She strove to speak her thanks, but she

could only weep,—and entreat that she might see her daughter in the morning.

Helena promised that she should—and Beaumont proposed that in the mean time, she too should accompany her mother; kindly offering to conduct her safely back to Mr. Morley's. Then having lifted the poor thing tenderly into the carriage, he followed Marian into it himself. When they were arrived at the wretched lodging of the unhappy woman, he put a small bank note into her hand, assuring her that Mrs. and Miss Villiers would take care that pecuniary distress at least should assail her no more.

Again she endeavoured to express her feelings—but in vain.

"God bless them! and bless you, Sir!" was all she could say. Frederick assisted her into the house, and taking particular note of it,—conducted the weeping, trembling Marian home again, and then proceeded to his own hotel.

CHAP. XLV.

The next morning, Beaumont, and Helena, having shortly so arranged it on the preceding evening, attended by Marian, proceeded to the abode of pining poverty. They found the unfortunate being who had so deeply engaged their pity, in anxious expectation of her daughter.

" But *this*"—said she,—" is a favour indeed !"—and she looked round her dreary apartment as if she would have said—

" This is no place for the reception of such guests !"

From this embarrassment, however, she was presently relieved by her charitable visitors, who in the kindest manner, consoled and cheered her. She assured them that she was already the better for the timely assistance she had received, as well as the unhoped for discovery which she had made ; and that she had also fared sumptuously in the morning by that kind

gentleman's liberality,—casting a grateful look on Frederick Beaumont.

When she had again and again embraced her daughter who knelt sobbing before her,—and again in faltering accents invoked a blessing on her benefactors—she thus addressed herself to Helena:—

"It will shortly, Madam, be my duty to make you fully acquainted with the circumstances that have combined to reduce me to my present necessitous condition. You will find much to pity, and more to condemn: but, towards *you*, I have no right to maintain the slightest reserve:—for the present, it may be sufficient to inform you, that I was born of very respectable parents,—but, whom, I fear, I am never more to behold.—One, I know, is gone!"—and she hid her face, and shed some tears—"My name is Rose Woodland."

"Rose Woodland!" cried Frederick, and Helena, in a breath, and they cast on each other a look full of anxious astonishment.

"Dear Madam! dear Sir! what means

this? do you then know any thing respecting my name?—perchance my father—O tell me if indeed you have ever known—is he alive?"—

After a few moments silence, Frederick replied,

"He is—I believe—in existence."

"Where?—where? is he in health? does he live in comfort—or—in misery like me?"

Never had the kind-hearted Beaumont known a task so painful as was that of satisfying these pressing interrogatories.

Helena, on her part, strove to prepare the unhappy being for what she was to hear by every soothing, every strengthening consideration she could call to mind. At last the dreadful situation of the unhappy maniac was explained,—and the afflicting circumstances that led to it touched as tenderly as possible. The agonies of sorrow and remorse were renewed by this account, in the mind of his unfortunate daughter. No longer could she listen to the voice of consolation from

the lips of Helena, or the timid soothings and remonstrances of the agitated Marian:—no longer could she rouse to arguments of fortitude and submission, from the compassionate Frederick. She could only weep, and reproach herself as the guilty cause of the calamities that had overwhelmed her family.

Helena, now judging it best to leave her at such a time without restraint, offered her the consolation of her daughter's company for the rest of the day. This she thankfully accepted, and promised that she would strive to bend her mind to submission, though she dared not hope for peace.

Helena made some addition to Frederick's former bounty, to the afflicted Rose, charging her not to deprive herself of any comforts which it was in their power to supply, and encouraging her to hope, that some plan might be effected for her permanent support.—

On their return to Mrs. Morley's, they unfolded to Mrs. Villiers the further dis-

covery they had made,—and warmly did she partake with them, the sympathetic interest with which the unhappy Rose had filled their hearts.

" I have pledged my word to Mr. Melcombe, that I will go to Oxford, within two days," said Frederick, " but it is long since I have heard of the wretched old man, and, precious as my hours now are," glancing at his Helena—" I will go early to-morrow to St. Luke's, and enquire whether there be yet any hope in his case, or any possibility of advantage to him from an interview with his unhappy daughter.

" I will then return hither to fulfil my engagement, as well as indulge myself by passing my last day at this hospitable house."

On his arrival at St. Luke's, he was informed that poor Woodland was precisely in the same state as before, that, if his daughter were admitted to him, he would probably have no recollection of her, and that, should he remember her,—(such was the peculiar nature of his unhappy case), it

would be more likely to increase than to abate his malady.

With this melancholy account, Frederick returned to his friends, and the next morning departed for Oxford.

CHAP. XLVI.

Helena had not seen Mrs. Falkener for some days;—and she now wished most particularly for an interview, principally for the purpose of consulting with her respecting poor Rose Woodland. The morning after Beaumont's departure, then, she bent her steps towards the house of her friend;—but, had no sooner entered, than she perceived the traces of sorrow in her eyes;—for the present, therefore, all other interests were lost in her anxiety concerning the cause of her friend's disturbance.

"My dear Matilda," she cried, "your countenance alarms me:—Mr. Falkener, I hope,—is well?"

Mrs. Falkener threw her arm round Helena, as she sat beside her, and, hiding her face on her shoulder, burst into tears. The tender heart of Helena was afflicted with this speechless and incomprehensible distress.

"What is this?" said she—"dear, amiable creature! what can thus have overwhelmed you?—and who—who is the cause of all this?"

Mrs. Falkener, after a long pause, replied—"Alas! sweet Helena! the cause is no other than yourself."

"*I!*—*I* the cause of making you miserable!—what for Heaven's sake, can I have done?"

Mrs. Falkener, regarding her with a smile of anguish,—answered—

"You have done nothing, my dear, that you could help doing:—You are only too amiable, too lovely—too engaging;"—and again she embraced her,

as if to satisfy her mind, that against *her* she had no complaint:—then, weeping afresh—at last—she proceeded;—

"You have rivalled me in my husband's love."

Had a serpent crossed her path, Helena would have felt less horror than at this moment. She could not move her lips—but gazed on Mrs. Falkener's desponding countenance with eyes suffused in tears. When she could speak—

"My dear friend"—said she,—"this cannot be. Mr. Falkener has never spoken or looked a thought which expressed to me any sentiments but those of kindness and esteem,"—and, in her turn, she took her friend in her arms, and endeavouring to smile,—"Come, now," said she, "this is only a little jealous fancy."—(Mrs. Falkener shook her head)—"Besides, do you consider how much we love each other?—which rivals, you know, never do."

"So I have heard," said Mrs Falkener; "but I understand nothing about it;—how is it possible for me to love you the

less for having a thousand graces in the eyes of my husband, while I see and feel that you have so many in my own? No, Helena! I did not love you the less for rivalling me, and I now love you the more for the kind and tender manner in which you have received my confidence, and endeavoured to persuade me that I have been mistaken in the subject of it. I aver," added she, with enthusiasm,—" that, at this agonizing moment, you are dearer to my heart than you have ever been before."

It was certain that Helena fully shared this feeling, and that her mind was as pure from the delirium of vanity, as was that of Mrs. Falkener from the poison of jealousy. Still did Helena persist in denying that Mr. Falkener entertained towards her any sentiment that resembled love; and she earnestly entreated her friend to explain to her the circumstances on which she had grounded her apprehensions.

" On his looks when you are present; on his words when you are absent; most

particularly on his frequent, and often suddenly corrected, questions respecting the days, and the hours, on which I have expected to see you—and, I repeat it, on those dangerous attractions which form an excuse for his inconstancy."—"Nay, then," said Helena, after musing awhile on what she had heard, "it is absolutely necessary that I absent myself, my dear Matilda, 'till your suspicions, whether founded or otherwise, have passed away, and left your mind at ease."

"No—not for the world"—she replied—"on no consideration would I have him suspect that I have imparted this discovery to *you*,—nor even that I have made it myself.—If his *love* is lost let me not lose his respect:—of all the torments of existence, let him not be haunted with a jealous wife. To-morrow is, as you know, our singing morning; and I make it a point with you that you come as usual, and suffer no change whatever to appear either in your looks, or manner, towards Mr. Falkener."

"It will be a hard task, Matilda;—I

am a bad hypocrite, and I feel very heartily angry with him, I assure you—to let a thought wander from such a wife!—it is past all forgiveness."

"Cannot *you* forgive him, Helena, if *I* can?"—Helena—after another pause—now ventured to say—

"I have never yet, in my whole life, withheld any thing from my mother:—must I conceal this?"

Mrs. Falkener gently started—a slight blush of mortified pride passed over her cheek;—but, recovering herself, she answered:—

"No—my dear Helena;—*I* will not be the first to prescribe the concealment of a single thought from your amiable mother. She will give me her sympathy, and, perhaps, will kindly assist us both with her advice."

They now parted with hearts bound together by no common ties of confidence and esteem. Mrs. Villiers was scarcely less wounded than her Helena, by what she related; and wished, with her, that Mrs.

Falkener had not insisted on the continuance of the musical engagements. Helena had, however, been obliged to give her promise—and, in compliance with it, she went—having *really* attired herself in the least becoming manner she could devise.

Mr. Falkener was present during the whole lesson; and, arduous to Helena was the task of addressing him with her usual ease and frankness of manner. She now made more particular observation on his looks and his manner,—and did certainly perceive, in both, something which she had not remarked before. She thought that she was not obliged to exert her voice to the full extent of its powers; and, in truth, she not only avoided that error, but ran so far into the contrary extreme, that Mrs. Falkener was in alarm, lest her husband should afterwards observe upon it, and apply to her any embarrassing questions on the subject.

Helena not only sung in a low and powerless voice, but, did so marvellously contrive to discard from it every particle of

expression, that her master nearly lost his patience, and told her he was afraid she had been so much engaged in the amusements of this fine, gay town, that she had forgotten to practise his lessons. This mortification she could support; but, when Mr. Falkener, as he handed her down stairs, expressed the tenderest apprehensions that the diminished powers of her voice might be occasioned by uneasiness, or indisposition, and concluded by venturing to press her hand, in a sudden rapture to his heart; she regarded him with an indignation she could no longer command, and, snatching her hand away from him, hastily left the house.

CHAP. XLVII.

WHEN Helena returned to Wimpole Street, she found, to her infinite regret, that Lord Edgeworth had been there. The ladies had given orders to be denied to all visitors. Mr. Morley was not at home, and Lord Edgeworth, who had enquired for Mr. Morley, and Mrs. Villiers, had left a card for each.

"What an annoyance will this be to Mr. Morley," said Helena;—"well! I rejoice that I was from home!—I hope I shall see no more of him—but he *lives* at Lady Richmond's."

"I wonder how *poor* Mr. Fairford does!" said Mrs. Villiers.

"Not broken-hearted, Mamma; for I have heard no more of him;—he will recover, I dare answer for him."

The next morning, Helena took Marian with her to visit her mother. They found her considerably improved in health, and

appearance; and, as her spirits were somewhat tranquillized, Helena forbore to disturb them by communicating the melancholy result of Frederick's enquiries after her father.

In a very short time after their arrival, Rose Woodland addressing herself to Helena, with a countenance which spoke an internal effort of principle and resolution, thus began—

"And now, Madam, the opportunity is before me of performing the indispensable, though humiliating duty, of acquainting you with the particulars of my past unfortunate and erring life;—and it is a warning which I owe to my daughter, to relate them in her presence."

"No, no—no"—cried Marian, throwing herself into the arms of her mother, and bathing her with her tears—"let not *me* hear a single word which it will grieve you to speak;—I ought not to require warnings, my dear mother. Heaven knows *I* have been taught all that is good, and whenever I may be *very* wrong, it will be

all my own fault :—my honoured mistress, and this dear, dear lady, have done all they can to make me like themselves :—O if *you* had been brought up as *I* have been" ——and breaking suddenly from her mother, she rushed out of the room.

" She is right"—said Helena,—deeply affected by this scene—in which poor Rose could only speak by tears.—At length, with one more struggle for composure, she began ;—'

" After what I have already told you, Madam, and what you too well know respecting my parents, it will be necessary for me to add but few words concerning my mother, on whose memory I cannot reflect without the deepest remorse, since I have too much reason to fear that my errors, and those of another of her children, cut short her existence."—Here she was, for some moments, unable to proceed. " My father was one of the better sort of farmers—yet my mother had received an education which rendered her his superior ;—but, she loved him entirely, and for many

years, they lived in happiness. My mother was extremely fond of reading; and I, as I grew up, became no less so.—In her little library was a variety of useful, and instructive books; but they were not all equally attractive to my young and thoughtless mind. I had a brother a few years older than myself, who was a reader also; and among his books, there were many which particularly allured me by the novelty of their reasonings, and the graces of their style.—The young farmers around us, and the higher tradesmen of a neighbouring country-town, had taken frequent opportunities of flattering, not only this now faded countenance, but, what little understanding I had received from nature, and cultivated by reading. This understanding, this cultivation, by communicating to my conversation somewhat of superiority to that of my young female companions, made me appear, to the eyes of my flatterers, in a light far above that in which I have since been mournfully convinced that I deserved to be viewed,—and too soon the opinions

of me professed by those flatterers, became indeed my own. The books I have alluded to, had a tendency to dissolve the ties of domestic gratitude, to invalidate the asserted supremacy of man, and to annihilate the respect which is due to the sacred bond of matrimony.

"When my mother perceived me perusing these books, she would look slightly over them, and sometimes warn me that they were absurd, and of evil tendency;—but she hoped I read them only for amusement, and that I had too much sense to be injured by their contents. Unhappily, however, I had just sense enough to be dazzled, and amused by them, but too little to confute, or even to withstand them. I have confessed to you that flattery found an easy passage to my heart. It was no wonder, then, that the soil, which pushed forth vanity, as its native plant, should readily receive the seeds of error; and that but little culture should be necessary for producing the baleful fruits of both. My brother did not very long reside at home: having no bent towards the rural

occupations of my father, he had been placed with an attorney in the town to which I have alluded, and which was but too near to our,—as yet, happy abode. He was, however, very little fitted for his situation:—the voice of control, and the restraints of industry, were alike unwelcome to his nature: his passions were violent, and his mind was ever ambitious of some object beyond its reach, which he ever wanted perseverance to pursue.

"These dispositions occasioned considerable anxiety to our dear parents: they would sometimes express their fears that Robert would never settle to any thing; but their anxieties usually ended in the confident hope—how often have I heard with pride!—that Rose would be the comfort and blessing of their old age! Just as I had attained my eighteenth year, I was invited, by the family with whom my brother dwelt, to pass a few days with them, during the period of the assizes, to partake of the amusements which are usually prepared on such occasions. While I was at the house

of this family, I accompanied them to a ball, which was held for those of the second rank in the town. It was my fate to be invited to dance by a young man, about ten years older than myself, in whom the gift of pleasing, in manner and conversation, was united to a handsome, and striking person.

"After the dance was concluded, my brother joined me, and soon fell into discourse with my partner, who appeared to be much pleased with us both—called on us the next morning, and, in brief, soon won my brother's confidence, and my affections. My visit was prolonged by the solicitations of my entertainers; and long walks, and conversations with our new intimate, too frequently and too pleasantly engaged our time. In his principles and opinions, I found a full confirmation of all the fallacious reasonings, which I had imbibed from my favourite studies; not to intrude too long upon your patience, a very few weeks, during which he visited me at my father's, whither I had now re-

turned, sufficed him to complete the entire conquest of my heart, and the total subversion of my principles. Being fully acquainted with what I termed the prejudices of my parents, I knew it would be a hopeless labour to remove them, and now thought of nothing but stratagems for eluding the protection of these dear parents, and escaping with my unworthy lover, (according to his repeated proposition,) to his residence in London, where, he assured me that I should be visited, and welcomed to the world, by all his relations. In compliance with custom, I was to adopt his name—a name now for ever forsworn! My parents I still *loved*, although perfectly satisfied that I owed them no obligations; —yet I meant, when happily settled, to write to them, and claim the continuance of their affections. In a word, my escape was accomplished,—and in that escape my ruin. We were established in handsome lodgings in London; but no relations approached to welcome me. I was told that they were not just at this period in town;

and, in truth, too deeply was I attached to my unworthy companion, to be very solicitous concerning them.

"I wrote to my parents, explaining my conduct, my opinions, and my situation. The answers were full of affection,—an affection agonized by my conduct, and mingled with reproof, remonstrance, and the most pressing solicitations that I would return to my duty.

"I wept over their sufferings, their displeasure,—my separation from them; but, the ties of duty I had learned to disdain, and though my love for them was strong, that which I felt for my betrayer was stronger still. In a few days afterwards, I was surprised one evening, by a visit from my brother. I prepared myself for his reproaches, but from him I had nothing to dread: he was equally deluded with myself, and carelessly informed me that he was tired of copying parchments and casting up accounts; and that Mr. Fletcher, that was his name, had tempted him, when they last met, to follow us to

London, and promised to lead him into the possession of riches, through paths worthy of his spirit, and genius. I had never enquired whence arose the abundance of which I partook, but, in a little time, I was scarcely ever indulged with the society of either my brother, or Fletcher, during the evening:—and as they frequently returned not till the night was almost spent, I one day expostulated with them, and insinuated that they seemed to forget how many hours I was passing in solitude—for that though they, no doubt, had the comfort of agreeable society, I had absolutely none. The same system, however, was pursued, for many months. In the interval, I perceived an alarming change in the spirits, as well as temper, of my lover; and at length began to apprehend an abatement of his affection. Too well grounded were my fears;—for now, when I tenderly reproached him for his frequent absences, and his abstraction of mind when he was present, he would occasionally answer me with roughness,

and once asked me, how I was to be supported, if he did not work for me. I was unable to comprehend what work could be executed at such hours,—yet could learn from him, nothing more; he now, too, become so moody, and, at times, even so ferocious, that I dared not enquire further. At length, early one morning, and soon after my poor girl was born, he came into my apartment, with his hair, and dress, all in disorder, and his face the picture of despair.—He sat down, clasped his hands, and told me we were all ruined.—I started up in my bed in agony, and asked him, how?—where?—why?—He said,

" 'Luck, and the devil, too, had turned 'against him, and it was all over with 'him.'—

' " Luck!' cried I, 'in what, for 'Heaven's sake?'

' " Gaming, Child, gaming—how else 'do you think I have lived all this time?—'there—that's half of what I have in the 'world—and so make the most of it.'

" With these words he threw me half

a guinea—then rushed from my sight, and—I never saw him more.

"The woman of the house, seeing him run by in this state of distraction, came up to me, and found me fainting, for I was still in a very weak and languid state, and had been totally overcome by the information I had received. The woman, humanely, as I thought, recovered me from my swoon; and seeing me weep, enquired what had afflicted me. In my simplicity, I told her all—and my concluding words were—

"'What is to become of me?'—She told me I must not fret too much, but try to get well as soon as I could:—yet, as I threw a passing glance on her countenance, I thought I could perceive on it a malicious smile. In a few hours after I was thus deserted, my brother came to visit me. He repeated the same dreadful tale,—with the still more dreadful addition of his having now discovered, that the person who had deceived us both, was not only a gamester, but a coiner, and so deeply

involved in debt, and disgrace, that nothing now remained for him but flight; 'and,' said he, 'I conclude that you will never 'more behold him.'

"He then completed my despair, by disclosing to me that he also had been seduced to the gaming-table by this wretched being, though not into his fraudulent occupation, which he had, to the last, as much as possible, concealed.

"My brother had only now (as he said) gained the above information from one of Fletcher's creatures, who enquiring hastily of my brother, after his employer, (for they had all three been at different times associated as gamesters) unwarily used some expressions which led him to enquire further, and the immediate result was, the discovery of these dark transactions.

"My brother had, as it now plainly appeared, been kept in total ignorance on this point, having himself been supported in apparent affluence, and his gaming necessities amply supplied,—all to no other end than that he might, in case of ultimate

suspicion, or detection, be brought forward to answer for the character of the man, who was his ruin, and mine.

" In consequence, however, of some late discoveries, the eye of the law was upon the deceiver; insomuch, that a sudden flight from his country, and that alone, could save his life.

" 'And I,'—added my unhappy brother, 'I, too, must leave thee, my poor Rose! 'for the sad truth is, that, last night, I 'grew desperate with ill luck—doubled my 'stakes, and lost all.—To write such a his-'tory to my father, and strain him for sup-'plies, is a measure which I am not yet 'hardened enough to take: but I *will* let 'him know *your* situation, my poor girl, 'and—doubt not—he will fly to relieve 'you, and take you again to his bosom.'

" 'And what will *you* do?' cried I, almost choked with grief.

" 'I know not, yet,'—said he,—'but I 'must be gone!—I am not only pledged 'for my losses of last night, but in debt to 'every tradesman I have employed since I 'came to this fatal town.'

"We had a dreadful parting, Madam; and he promised that, should he ever again find a situation of credit, and comfort, he would let me know it;—but him, also, I fear, that I have seen for the last time.

"From this period, I observed a greater change in the manners of the mistress of the lodging, than I conceived it possible to account for, merely by her fear of a failure in my payments.

"She grew familiar, and even insolent. I took an occasion of assuring her, that I hourly expected letters, and supplies, from my parents;—a bitter smile was her only answer. These supplies, however, arrived not; and in about a fortnight after my brother's departure, I received a death-blow to every hope on earth, by a letter written from my father's house, in reply to that which had been received from my brother. It informed me that my father's affairs had gone very badly ever since I had forsaken him; that he had taken no joy in any thing; and that my mother, who had been ill, at the time my brother's

letter was received, became so much worse upon it, that my father could attend to no one else, but had often been heard to say, that as soon as he could get his dame well again, he would go to London, and fetch home his poor, poor Rose; but that my mother's death, which took place within a few days, had quite broken his heart;—that he had talked no more of Rose; but had disappeared one morning early; had left his farm in a ruinous condition; nor could any one conjecture whither he was gone.

"Imagine to yourself, my dear Madam, what were my feelings at this account."

Helena seemed to have imagined them but too well, and her sympathy spoke in her eyes.

Rose continued—"But, how much more had I yet to endure! The woman of the house now began to tell me I was too handsome to despair, and insinuated to me the most insulting proposals:—on my rejecting them with horror, she told me that I must then discharge all her dues, and leave her house immediately. Upon ex-

amination, I found that the sum I owed her far exceeded my little remaining possessions, including a few trinkets which I had received as presents. She then observed, that I had very good clothes, and insisted that I should leave them in part of payment:—and now burst forth her long-smothered rage,—and with it, all its cause. —She told me, that if every one had their own, those clothes would be none of mine; for, that 'till I and my c——d arts (she said, Madam,) came in the way, the *gentleman* had given every thing to her poor daughter, whom he had promised to marry, —' and, if it had not been *you*,' and she shook her clenched fist in my face, ' he ' would have done it. It is your extrava- ' gance that has brought the poor gentleman ' into trouble, and you richly deserve all ' that is come upon you; and go you shall.'

" ' I will, cried I,'—hardly able to speak; ' and if it were not wishing the bitterest of ' evils to your daughter, I should say, would ' to Heaven he had married her before ever ' he saw my unfortunate face!'

"I was now obliged to discharge my nurse, and my other female servant, paying them nearly all I had, which they took, with tolerable civility, and departed. In a very few days afterwards, having nothing in the house to eat, and not choosing, nor even daring, to ask this unwomanly female to provide any thing for me, I bore the pressure of hunger 'till evening, and then, unable to endure it longer, I wrapped my cloak round my baby, and myself, and, ill as I was, went tottering out to a neighbouring shop, literally to purchase bread. When I returned, and knocked at the door of the house, it was not opened, and, —can you believe it, Madam?—the pitiless mistress of it looked out at the window, and told me it never should be opened to me again; and then, besides many other expressions too dreadful to repeat, she called me swindler, and summoned the watchman to take me away.

"The dread of his approach enduing me with momentary strength, I ran round the nearest corner, and continued my

trembling flight 'till I could continue it no longer. My senses half bewildered,—no idea rested on my mind but that of escaping as far as possible from the house of wretchedness, and the fiend who governed it.—At last, I sat, or rather fell, down, on a sheltered seat, upon a bridge;—to which, without knowing how, I had found my way.

"It was, by this time, quite dark; and a sleety rain, which the wind drove full against me, began to fall. It increased every moment—I trembled for my infant, and covered it as well as I could with my cloak. Still, the damp winter air pierced through its tender frame, exposed to it, alas! for the first time. The poor infant began to cry: never shall I forget the effect of that cry on my heart!

"'O where can I house thee for the 'night?'—said I—but not a resource presented itself to my agonized mind. I, also, began again to feel the calls of hunger, having, in my flight, and terror, dropped the bread which I had purchased. At

length, I remembered that my milliner seemed a worthy and respectable woman; and I bethought myself of applying to her for a night's lodging; but I knew not where I was, and determined to make enquiries of the next passenger. At this moment, a faint sickness overcame me, and I was removed, as I afterwards heard, by a benevolent gentleman, (who, accidentally passing, had seen me fall,) to his own house. As soon as possible after my arrival, they conveyed me, in a state of insensibility, to a comfortable bed, which, by his humane order, had been prepared for me; and, so wearied and exhausted was I, that I lost, for several hours, all sense of my sufferings in a profound sleep. But, although a little refreshed by it, I found myself so ill, on waking in the morning, that I was unable to rise. Every tender attention was paid to me for many days; and, by these means, under the blessing of Providence, my life was saved.

"When I was well enough to leave my chamber, I was kindly visited by Mr. Wil-

son, the gentleman who had so charitably befriended me in my extremity. I endeavoured to speak my acknowledgments, but he kindly silenced me; and, in about a fortnight, I had nearly recovered my health and strength.

" I then assured him that I neither hoped, nor wished, for any thing more in this world, than to be established in some reputable mode of earning my own subsistence,—how humbly was immaterial;—I deserved not any indulgence of my pride, and desired only the means of support for my baby, and myself. I added—that before I could properly solicit his recommendation, it became me to disclose to him those fatal errors by which I had plunged myself into the misery that had overwhelmed me.

" He was charmed with what he termed my candour; but I could not fancy that there was a merit in what I felt to be a duty: he told me that my sincerity was every thing to him; but he dreaded,—and he was evidently distressed as he spoke,

—that it would little avail in compensating for the weakness of my conduct, with those females, to whose notice and employ, he could hope to recommend me,—females, of whose virtue, he was sorry to observe, too large a portion consisted in establishing the most rigid rules of judgment for those of their own sex who had gone astray.

"My heart sunk within me at this account. I had before been keenly alive to doubt and uncertainty, respecting the possibility of my gaining a tolerable livelihood, from my want of skill in elegant works; and those of mere utility, I well knew would but scantily furnish me with bread, and decent clothing.

"While all things were in this hopeless state with me, Mr. Wilson, after some preparation, acquainted me that he loved me;—offered me his name—his protection—affluence—every thing, but—marriage. Awakened, as I had been, from the dreams of error, I was now perfectly aware that this was not an idle ceremony. I felt, moreover, that although my heart was

filled with gratitude for my benefactor, it yet beat with some remains of love for that unworthy object by whom I had been deluded and deserted.

"Yet—indigence, and the world's rejection threatened me; kindness arrayed in affluence, allured me; gratitude urged, and maternal love impelled."

Helena involuntarily started——

"I blush to confess that these motives caused me to hesitate, on his proposals;—but—finally—I rejected them. Nothing could exceed the tender and attentive kindness of Mr. Wilson; but the objections before mentioned, would, I was full well assured, poison the source of peace, and though I might be cherished, and beloved, I was certain that I should be wretched.

"To release your patience, dear Madam, as speedily as possible, I shall briefly inform you, that—feeling an unconquerable repugnance to accept of any further pecuniary obligations from Mr. Wilson, I privately arranged a plan with a person whom I bribed to secrecy, and retired to a place

at some little distance from London, devoting my days to industry, poverty, and penitence.

"I entered into the humble employment of working under a mantua-maker in a small line of business,—and for four years, by means of great diligence and frugality, I kept myself just above want. My child was the smiling soother of all my cares, and in her were now centred all the remains of vanity that still lurked in my bosom. I indulged myself in attiring her with a neatness, and even delicacy, rather beyond what I could prudently afford; and to this last spark of vanity, I conclude it was, that I owed the loss of her. One day that she had been playing on a green, at a little distance from the house, I missed her,—and soon afterwards, heard that some gipsies had been seen passing through the village. What I then suffered from the agony of grief, and have since endured from the extremes of penury, would pierce your gentle heart with anguish but to hear of. I was for a few days, delirious; and,

about the same time, the kind-hearted woman for whom I worked, was taken ill and died within a fortnight. After this, thrown, as I was, once more, on the wide world, for pity and subsistence, and robbed of my only joy, I cared not what became of me. At last, humbling myself before Heaven, I acknowledged that I had deserved to suffer,—and submitting myself to its decrees, I roused my mind once more to patience and exertion.

"A poor woman, who lived near me, obtained a painful livelihood by washing clothes. She was in search of an assistant, and, reduced as I now was, to absolute necessity, I engaged myself in her service, and continued thus to labour for some years, 'till we at length removed to London, where my employer had hopes of a more advantageous establishment; but, where bad debts, and a hard landlord, reduced her almost to beggary. She could now only earn a precarious subsistence, from chance employment, by the day. I endeavoured to do the same; but my

frame, and state of health, were unequal to such fatigue. I soon became known to a few compassionate ladies, who had employed me on different occasions;—but, my life was a scene of the deepest distresses of poverty, occasionally relieved by charity, but frequently forgotten or unknown;—and, it was after a long fit of illness, which had exhausted what small resources, and even what little credit, I possessed, that the fear of being starved to death, drove me forth into the street to beg for food; when Heaven, in its mercy, surely, forgave my offences, and repaid me for half my sufferings past, by conducting me to *you*."

Thus did the poor misguided Rose conclude her melancholy tale; and so strong was the interest it excited in the tender heart of Helena, that it was hard to say whether the narrator or herself, had felt most keenly during the recital.

The words and looks of the latter, were fraught with pity, and soothing kindness. She strove to speak peace to the heart of

the penitent sufferer, by representing to her, that though great had been her fall, yet, no less signal had been her recovery, —ending her consolations, as she began them,—by assurances that she would neglect no possible opportunity of procuring for her some means of obtaining permanent support;—with a closing promise, that, whenever Mrs. Woodland's situation should enable her to receive her daughter, (grieved as she should be to part with the affectionate girl,) she would immediately resign her. Rose, after acknowledging, with abundance of tears, this inestimable kindness, declared most steadily, that while Marian was a good girl, and useful to her mistress, whatever her own situation might hereafter be, she would never be guilty of such selfishness, and ingratitude, as to call her away from her benefactress.

Helena hastened back to her mother, with a view of communicating to her this sorrowful tale, and endeavouring to provide, as soon as possible, for the support of the care-worn being who had related it.

CHAP. XLVIII.

HELENA was too deeply engaged in the interests of the afflicted Rose, to delay, longer than 'till the succeeding day, an effort for her relief. She determined to make her first application to Lady Richmond.

"She has a kind heart,"—said Helena to her mother—"though a volatile mind; and I am certain will do something for us, if she can; and her fortune and connections will be brought in aid of her good inclinations."

On arriving at Lady Richmond's, she observed a curricle in waiting. This circumstance led her at once to hope that her Ladyship was at home, and to fear that she should not see her alone.

When she reached the drawing-room, she found—not Lady Richmond, but—Mr. Fairford. She half-retreated; saying

—"I understood that Lady Richmond was at home."

"So she is," said Mr. Fairford, humbly advancing,—"and was here this moment, and, in three moments more, will be here again:—be not afraid of me, Miss Villiers!"—and he cast a rueful look upon her—adding, with a sigh,—"Is it all over with me—quite?—for ever, and for ever?"

Helena replied—

"Indeed, Sir, I regret that this accidental meeting should occasion, to either of us, the pain, and embarrassment, of any further explanation. I hoped that Lady Richmond——"

At that moment Lady Richmond was entering; but observing who composed the tête-à-tête, drew back, from a determination to give poor Edward one chance more.

"O yes!—Lady Richmond told me all your cruelty; but wonder not that I am so unwilling to yield to it. What an unfortunate fellow I am! never to have been in earnest before in all my life, and the first

time I have set my whole heart upon an object, to be thrown down without a hope of resurrection."

"O no,"—said Helena:—he looked full of expectation and delight—"a little time will reconcile you to your first disappointment, and, some fair lady, in the brilliant circles of this vast assemblage of fair ladies——"

"Talk not of them"—interrupted he. "Upon my honour, I never thought seriously of any woman before, and am perfectly confident that I never shall again.—Give me, I beseech you, give me a little, *little*, hope to live upon!"

"If I did so, it must be false hope; and to give you that would be not only deceit, but ingratitude, in return for the distinction you have shewn me. Where can Lady Richmond be?"

"Well! don't look so sweet, and kind, and fascinating, while you are taking away every comfort of my life. Heigh ho!—You little think what a domestic fellow I should have been."

"I am convinced you have a fund of good-nature, and I doubt not of affection; and I do most sincerely wish you happy."

"Sincerely wish me happy! when you know, cruel creature! there is but one way to make me so, and *that* you deny me."

With a supplicating look, he was in the act of extending his hand towards her's, when Lord Edgeworth, who had been below with Sir William, without ceremony, entered the room. He stood still for a moment—then said, very gravely,

"I beg pardon"—and Helena cruelly embarrassed by the whole scene, and losing all patience at Lord Edgeworth's presence, and Lady Richmond's absence, rang the bell, while she said somewhat impatiently,

"The servant told me that Lady Richmond would come to me immediately."—

The footman entered.

"Are you sure, Sir, that Lady Richmond knows I am here?"

She now entered: and Helena, having

slightly returned Lord Edgeworth's bow, advanced towards her, saying,

"I was apprehensive of some mistake."

Lady Richmond begged ten thousand pardons, talked of the interruptions of mantua-makers, &c.—and Mr. Fairford, finding that all was over, even the little consolation of a tête-à-tête, paid his compliments, and drove away.

Lord Edgeworth began to—"hope Mrs. Villiers, &c. were well"—to "lament that they were not at home when he called,"—and humbly to enquire at what hour of the morning they were usually visible.

Helena evaded every thing by observing that, as she was only a visitor at the house, she could not possibly assume the privilege of appointing any time when it would be expedient for Lord Edgeworth to call on Mr. Morley.

The conversation became general, and my Lord, with a countenance in which pride was struggling to veil over mortifi-

cation at her cold and distant manners, took his leave.

When he was gone,

"Well!" said Lady Richmond, "I do not think it is Lord Edgeworth that will rival poor Edward."

"No—that it is not;" answered Helena, unwarily:—thus strengthening, in the mind of Lady Richmond, a suspicion which she had before entertained respecting Beaumont.

"To confess the truth," said her Ladyship, "I did not chuse to cut off Ned's last chance by breaking in upon your conversation. Did he make nothing of it, my dear Miss Villiers? I doubt not but he did his best to propitiate you."

"He did so," replied Helena, "but,—it cannot be:—do not distress me, dear Lady Richmond, by obliging me to repeat—what you flatter me by saying must disappoint you."

"Well! you are a hard-hearted little goddess, but a very sincere one, I must say; and have no turnings and windings,

such as goddesses are wont to have, and even fancy that it is proper to have."

"And now, my dear Madam," said Helena, "I will tell you what is the direct object of my visit;"—and immediately proceeding to give the heads of poor Rose's disastrous tale, she thus concluded:

"I come to you because it is probable that you have the power, and it is certain that you have the will, to afford her permanent relief, by the authority of your recommendation to some person of worth and credit, who is not too *virtuous* to forgive and employ her."

"Why then,"—replied Lady Richmond,—who was deeply interested by the story—"why, then, that very creditable, forgiving person, is now before you: for I was just about to enquire whether you,—or rather your mother, or Mrs. Morley, (for you do not yet understand these things,) could recommend me some trusty soul, to come and overlook my household, and save me from being cheated out of all reason, as, at present, I am.

And if your protegée is not above such a situation——"

"Poor thing!" said Helena, "she will not believe such a fate can be in store for her."—

"Why then, I will promise her not only my pity, and excuse, but, the strictest secrecy as to all the past, and an apartment to herself, excepting only that the butler and my own maid will have the honour of dining with her.—A handsome salary, and every possible accommodation, will also be at her service, and I want nothing of her but to keep my money, pay my bills, purchase what is wanted, and take care, I repeat, that it is wasted, and stolen, *in moderation.* She must be respectably dressed, you know, and, if she approves of what I have proposed, I will readily advance her——"

"O you are all goodness!" said Helena; "but, *we* will take care of all that, —and now, only tell me when she may come."

"In a fortnight from this day," an-

swered Lady Richmond; "there is an answer as ready as the question;—and when she is properly equipped, poor thing! I should wish to see her."

"You shall," replied Helena, "and now I must fly to her with this unhoped-for prosperity.—Farewell, and a thousand thanks."

"But stay one moment," said Lady Richmond, "are you all disengaged this day se'nnight?"

"I believe so."

"Then come and dine with me:—I will send a written invitation in due form."

Helena went immediately to Rose Woodland's lodgings.—She explained to her the proposal.—Rose was, indeed, afraid to believe that such a harbour was prepared for her; and her gratitude to Helena even surpassed her joy.

Helena, with a lightened heart, repaired with these tidings of success, to her mother; then wrote an account of it to Frederick, to whom she had before sketched an outline of the story,—and informed him

that she wished for his further assistance in the pecuniary way, as soon as possible.

He enclosed her a twenty pound note, in a letter containing injunctions that she would, if necessary, command his purse again.

The next morning, a letter was delivered to Miss Villiers, sealed with Lord Edgeworth's arms. She opened it—with some trepidation. It contained the most elaborate encomiums on her distinguished qualifications, emphatic expressions of devoted attachment, and unbounded offers of whatever settlements his fortune could furnish, and her friends would approve: to which were added some gently hinted possibilities of being anticipated in his addresses; but concluding with the most sanguine hope of reciprocal regard.

"He is not a despairing lover," said Helena, as she folded up the letter, and carried it to her mother.

Lord Edgeworth had, by no means, what is called a bad heart: he was certainly, however, born with vehement passions;

and the flatterers and dependants who attended his cricket-ground, nay his hobby-horse, and almost his cradle, by no means assisted in restraining their energies. The equalizing laws of a public education, contributed something towards moderating his pride; but, his passions, although restrained, being never subdued by his own efforts, were ready to burst forth again, with fresh vigour, when the too early inheritance of a title, and estate, gave the signal for their liberty. From this time, his will became his law; and, he ran the race of pleasure, without a bridle. He now, at the age of seven-and-thirty, began to be feelingly persuaded, that the wisest of men was in the right, when he pronounced that "all was vanity." Happiness he had not yet met with:—and therefore,—though, in fact he had never taken any road which led to it,—somewhat rashly concluded, that it was no where to be found: when he had seen our heroine only three or four times, however, he felt a rising suspicion that there might be such a

thing as felicity in domestic life; and, very shortly found himself growing into a conviction, that, with her, he should not fail of possessing it: nor did it ever once occur to him, now that the life above described had led him on towards the age of forty, that there could be any want of congeniality between *his* tastes, feelings, and pursuits, and those of the delicately refined, and exquisitely beautiful, Helena Villiers, in the bloom of eighteen. He was, however, sensible of a gentle check to the rapidity of these conclusions, from the cold politeness with which she ever received his attentions. Still he ventured to attribute this to respect;—a sentiment which he flattered himself his manners, and his rank, might not very improbably excite. The attentions of Frederick, indeed, and the smiling air with which they were received, "gave him" some "pause;" but, finding that this favoured hero had quitted the ground, he hoped that he had been mistaken in his apprehensions; and, he was rather stimulated, than discouraged, in his intended ad-

dresses, by finding her tête-à-tête with a rival, of whom he so lightly deemed as Mr. Fairford.

From Lady Richmond's, then, Lord Edgeworth had returned home, in the full resolution that he would lose no more time, in unfolding to Miss Villiers, his intention of marrying her; for, of her ready acceptance of him, he did not, now, suffer himself to doubt.

What, then, was his surprise, what his consternation, when he received from Mrs. Villiers, in reply to his epistle, the most polite, respectful, but positive rejection, in the name of her daughter, of his magnificent proposals!

His colour rose high—he read the letter again and again, and was almost of opinion, that his eyes must have deceived him.—

"This is very strange,"—cried he, soliloquizing; — "absolutely unaccountable!"—

He could not,—he would not, believe that the answer was decisive, and, he

proudly determined that it should not be so.

He, accordingly, waited on the lady the next day, and found her, most fortunately, as he thought, alone.

" Miss Villiers,—I hope—I trust, that the answer which I had the honour of receiving from the hands of Mrs. Villiers is not a conclusive one—or, if it were meant to be such, that it was not the result of your own unbiassed determination."

Helena, justly surprised at the visit, and still more at this address,—replied, in some confusion,—

" Excuse me, my Lord; it was both. On these points, to me so important, my mother leaves me absolute mistress of myself; and, there is no other person whatever, who has *authority* to control me.—I am deeply sensible of the liberality of your Lordship's proposals to one who has—nothing;—but, the return you ask, my Lord, it is not in my power to make. Matrimonial happiness must, as I conceive, necessarily rest on that only permanent foundation, conge-

niality of mind; and, where this exists not, as perhaps through some deficiency of mine,—is the case in the present instance, I *need* not, I *hope, inform* your Lordship, that there are no degrees in dignity, or affluence, that, to me, could make the slightest compensation for its absence."

Lord Edgeworth was not a man of sentiment,—and this declaration was to him not *very* intelligible: what he was able to understand of it he internally decided to be extremely high-flown.

He bowed haughtily, saying—

"I might, surely, Madam, have flattered myself, that my pretensions,—and my character in life,—should, at least, have claimed a little *deliberation*;—I might have hoped, that the only woman who had ever determined me to wear the bonds of wedlock, would not so suddenly, so decisively——" —the words dismissed, discarded, rejected, all passed successively through his mind, but he deigned not to adopt any of them; and, while he hesitated,—Helena relieved his difficulty, by assuring him, that, as her

decision was already made, she thought it a duty which his very handsome offers gave him a right to claim, not to delay the disclosure of it.

"Really, then, Miss Villiers, I must—excuse me—conclude, that some happier admirer has made an interest in your heart; or——"

"My Lord, I have alleged cause sufficient for my determination; and, I must, indeed, be of opinion, that you are not entitled to make any further enquiries."

"By Heaven, I will not tamely yield to any rival whom I shall adjudge to be an unworthy competitor."

"You *will* not, my Lord?—Is my hand at *your* disposal, or my own?"—She spoke this with the glow of resentment on her cheeks; and was rising to leave the room, when Mrs. Villiers entered. Lord Edgeworth rose,—with a kind of proud politeness; then, approaching Mrs. Villiers,—

"Madam, am I to consider Miss Villiers's rejection—(he was now *enforced* to say)—as *her* act, or as yours?"

Mrs. Villiers *drew up* a little in her turn, and answered him, with great dignity,—

"My Lord, on a point of such momentous concern to her *own* happiness, I should think it criminal to influence my daughter even by a word of *persuasion*. She is in her *own* hands; and what you have heard, has issued from her own heart."

"I am answered, Madam;"—and with a profound, but resentful bow, he took his leave.

"O, how rejoiced am I, that he is gone!"—cried Helena;—"I protest, I tremble from head to foot: never was such a proud, self-willed, intolerable creature existing: he almost told me that I *should* be his; yet certain it is, that, if there were not a Frederick in existence, I could never endure to think of *him*."

She then related all the particulars of their conversation, and ended by devoutly wishing, that she might never see him again.

"I will positively tell Lady Richmond,

that she must not expect me to join this dinner party, if he is to be there."

She did so; at the same time, explaining her reasons for the condition.

Lady Richmond undertook that he should not be of the party, and Helena began to hope that she should really see him no more.



CHAP. XLIX.

It is now time to return to Mr. Falkener, and endeavour to reconcile the magnetism which attracted him towards our heroine, with his recent marriage, and apparent affection for his wife.

Mr. Falkener, as before observed, was not a man of a very strong mind, nor of the superlative degree of sensibility; and, without one, or both of these gifts, the heart of man is seldom, if ever, inspired, and fully possessed, with that deep, perfect, and all-absorbing love, which is felt but

once, and which no measure of superiority in any other object, can, for an instant, divert, nor any period of time, or absence, destroy;—I speak, in short, of such a love, as is to be found, if no where else on earth, in the 13th stanza of the 5th Canto of that most exquisite poetical romance, admired that is,—immortal that shall be—"The Lay of the last Minstrel." Moreover, Mr. Falkener's attachment to his wife had not been of a long date; nor, consequently, could it have derived from the habitual interchange of long continued kindnesses, that strength, and power, which, in minds capable of the love before described, attain perfection at once, and are never lost again.

Yet, in the common acceptation of the term, he loved his wife:—and most decidedly esteemed her. Perhaps, if he had a wish respecting her, it was that nature had endowed her with a little more vivacity, and a certain variety in manner, and conversation. She was ever cheerful, and, in sweetness of temper, almost unrivalled;

—but, she was never gay. He saw Helena,—and, in her, discerned, in addition to all the amiable dispositions of Matilda, those very attractions which he had sometimes felt to be wanting in his wife.

He began by wishing that Matilda had possessed the vivacity of Helena; — he wished, too, that she could sing as Helena sang;—(in voice, and expression, his wife was certainly her inferior) and—in a little time the *tout ensemble* of the said Helena, fascinated his imagination, and staggered his constancy. Yet, was not *this* the *devotion* before described. Let us hope, for the sake of the most amiable of wives, and the most generous of rivals, that it was not the apostacy of the heart.

We will now follow Mrs. Falkener awhile through her painful trial,—observe what line of conduct she thought it most prudent to adopt—and patiently await its ultimate effect.

One morning, this amiable woman called on Mrs. Villiers; and, finding her

alone, very soon entered on the subject that was nearest to her heart.

"My dear Madam," said she, "your beloved daughter has, doubtless, acquainted you with the particulars of a subject which has extremely distressed us both, and, which, her invariable frankness towards you, made her desire my permission to communicate."—

"My dear Mrs. Falkener,"—replied Mrs. Villiers,—"it was with the deepest concern, that I did hear of it—a concern, which was increased tenfold by the amiable, and generous manner, in which you revealed to my daughter a circumstance of such unmerited mortification and disappointment—to yourself.

"But let us hope it is only a passing fancy, and that the heart which you have distinguished by *your* preference cannot be really estranged, and possibly, even now, is all your own. If I might advise, I would wish that you would suffer Helena to withdraw herself awhile."

"My dear Madam, what would he

think of this?—I feel confident that your opinion will thus far concur with mine;—that I ought not to do, nor suffer any thing, that will betray to him my discovery of what he is, perhaps, in his heart ashamed to confess to himself."

"The principle," replied Mrs. Villiers, "is worthy of yourself; and so noble is your conduct in my estimation, that I will leave the future direction of it wholly to your own judgment, without any further attempting to advise, in a case of so much delicacy, and one in which you alone are fully competent to decide. Whatever determination you may adopt, I cannot for a moment doubt of your eventual success."

Mrs. Falkener shook her head despondingly.—These last words of Mrs. Villiers dwelt upon her mind.—

"No," said she,—"when shut up by herself in her own apartment—"that can never be!" and, incapable of resisting her fears, she resigned herself to the melancholy train of thought which such an apprehension excited in her mind. At

length, wearied and terrified by the suggestions of her own sad imagination, she took up a volume of poems which lay upon her table, in the fruitless hope of beguiling herself into a momentary oblivion of her sorrows.

She turned over the leaves with listless inattention, 'till her eyes and her heart were suddenly rivetted to the page by the following lines, addressed to one, who like her in fate, but unlike her in fears, cherished expectations which the author condemned as the dreams of deluding Fancy :—

" Oh ! think not thou canst e'er retain,
Or Time that wand'ring heart regain !—
The wish is wild, the hope is vain,—
When Love is fled.

" Then Sorrow shall thy bosom tear,
And Memory fix her scorpions there,
And frequent fall the bitter tear,—
When Love is fled.

" Then shun, oh ! shun the fatal coast
Where all thy fondest hopes were crost,—
Where life was wreck'd and peace was lost,—
And Love is fled.

"Sooner shall tyrants pity know,
And learn to melt at others' woe,
Or servile hearts with honour glow,
Than Love return.

"Avarice may sooner shower her wealth
On Misery, and do good by stealth,
The sick refuse the boon of health,—
Than Love return.

"Sooner the wretch, on Afric's shore,
Complain of slavery no more,
But court his galling chain and oar,
Than Love return.

"But while it lives, and reigns, and glows
Within the heart, all human woes
It sooths, or hushes to repose,
With magic power!

"It is life's sun, whose sacred ray
Lights up our intellectual day:—
It sets——we wither—droop—decay—
That sad, sad hour!"

"O prophesy too fatal for my peace!" said Mrs. Falkener, as she turned her swimming eyes from the page, and closed the book in an agony of tears.

Still, when her mind had a little recovered its strength, after the refreshments

of repose, the conversation with Mrs. Villiers began to make its due impression; and her heart felt somewhat lightened by her high approbation, and at times was half tempted to give admission to her encouraging hopes.

She continued to deport herself towards her husband with assumed cheerfulness, and real kindness.—She received Helena with smiles of affection—reproached her in the presence of Mr. Falkener, if she had been many days absent,—and often, when solicited, joined her voice to both of theirs, in a trio or glee,—while that voice trembled with agitation, and her heart beat with anguish. During this time, we must do Mr. Falkener the justice to state, that he testified no neglect—nor gave any symptoms of unkindness to his wife;—but, his attentions wanted those marks of tender admiration, and decided preference, which had inspired them before—*had* it been otherwise, he must have been, what unquestionably, he was not, a

finished hypocrite.—But, to leave these things, awhile, to their natural course.—

Mrs. Villiers and her daughter were one morning, apprized of a visitor, without a name.—It was Rose Woodland. She was now attired in garments suitable to her new situation, and so changed by the effect of dress, amended health, the joy of having recovered her lost daughter, and the hope of being in a great measure, restored to credit, and peace of mind, that it was scarcely possible for them, at the first instant, to recollect her.

She was come, she said, once more to endeavour to speak her gratitude, and to enquire the address of Lady Richmond. Helena gave her a card of direction, rejoiced with her on her improved looks, and opening prospects.

With a faltering voice, poor Rose enquired whether it was impossible for her to see her father;—when Helena, for the first time, as it could be no longer avoided, reported to her the melancholy account, which Frederick had received at St. Luke's.

—It renewed the bitterness of her regrets, —and she took her leave in tears.

After an affectionate interview with her daughter, she waited on Lady Richmond, who received her with an affability, and delicacy, which perfectly charmed her. —Lady Richmond was extremely prepossessed by her manners, and appearance, and every thing was arranged in preparation for their future engagement, which was to commence in about ten days.

CHAP. L.

On the day before that which was appointed for the party at Sir William Richmond's, Helena, accompanied only by Marian, in a leisure hour after dinner, walked to Mary-le-bone, for the purpose of offering to Rose Woodland, whatever assistance she

might require, in entering on the proposed change in her situation.

When they had arrived almost within sight of the house, the confused motions of a crowd, advancing rapidly towards them, caused them, first, to stop, and then to endeavour to return.

Looking back, as they retreated, they perceived, in the midst of the throng, a bear, which had broken loose from his keeper. The enraged animal still pushing forward, was breaking in amongst the people,—pursuing, sometimes one, sometimes another: at length he made towards the pavement on which Helena and her attendant were flying from him, and the crowd, driving tumultuously against them, soon separated them from each other.

Marian reached her mother's house unhurt; but was terrified beyond expression, on finding that her young mistress did not join her there. Rose was almost equally alarmed, and both rapidly traversed all the adjacent streets in search of her, lest, in the late confusion, she should have missed her

way. They then proceeded trembling to Mr. Morley's. There, however, she was not; and they were driven to the dreadful necessity of recounting to Mrs. Villiers, the late incident, together with the extraordinary disappearance of her daughter. Mrs. Villiers uttered a shriek of terror, and was half-distracted by the apprehensions that were, in a moment, rushing on her mind. The kind and excellent Mrs. Morley said, and did, all that was possible on the occasion,—dispatched servants in every direction, in search of Helena,—but, it was in vain that she endeavoured to speak comfort to her mother. Helena lost in a crowd, in the streets of London, with an angry bear in close pursuit of her, and driving all before him!—It was an assemblage of horrors far too dreadful for a mother,—and such a mother,—long to sustain. Night came on—and no tidings of Helena! Mrs. Villiers fell into one fit after another; and when Lady Richmond came to her, which she did on the first tidings of the alarm, she found this ten-

der mother in a state of delirium. The physician who had been summoned, declared, after hearing the circumstance, that it was impossible to administer any thing but a composing draught, which, with difficulty, they prevailed on her to take. Its effect was, in some degree, beneficial; and she obtained about an hour's sleep, though of a restless and feverish kind.

Helena, terrified as she was, had preserved sufficient presence of mind, to make a sudden turn, instead of continuing to fly, with the crowd, before the furious animal; and escaped in safety behind him. She was still trembling, and panting for breath, when a carriage, which had been slowly moving onward, stopped close beside her. —The step was let down, and a gentleman darting from it, eagerly caught her, now nearly fainting, and with the assistance of his servant, lifted her into the carriage.

"Take me, pray take me home, immediately," she exclaimed.

"Home,"—said the gentleman to his servant, as he closed the door.

Helena, alarmed and agitated as she was, did not, at the first instant, perceive, that this gentleman was no other than Lord Edgeworth; who had instantly seized the hint which her unwary word had suggested, and ordered his carriage *home*.

Nothing could equal her dismay at the discovery. She, however, commanded herself, so far, as to express her acknowledgments for his timely aid; but, calling to mind the situation in which she had left poor Marian, she bitterly lamented it to him,—saying, that she had, in the tumult, been separated from her female attendant, for whom she was under the severest apprehensions; adding, that she should be most particularly obliged to him, if he would drive back to the spot, and permit her to enquire after her safety, at the house of her mother, whither she had been going.

The carriage was driving forward at a furious rate; and Lord Edgeworth only replied to the request of Helena, by assuring her that he could not again venture her into the scene of danger. He endeavoured

to sooth her alarms, and addressed her with every possible expression of tenderness and respect, while ideas were rising in his mind, which really owed their existence to the unexpected occasion which had just presented itself. Of these ideas we shall shortly behold the effects. In the mean time, his Lordship found it absolutely necessary, from what he had seen of the character and deportment of Helena, to adopt a more subdued and obsequious mode of address towards her, than he had before condescended to use.

On this new system, he continued his soft addresses, to which Helena made very brief replies. She was every moment expecting to be set down in Wimpole Street, when (the confusion of her mind having prevented her from noticing the contrary turn of the carriage) she found that it was stopping at a house which she had never seen before.

"What house is this, my Lord?—Where are we?"—cried Helena;—"the people have mistaken your orders—did you

not direct them to Wimpole Street, my Lord?"

"Do not agitate yourself, dear Miss Villiers,"—said his Lordship,—"my house was much nearer than Mr. Morley's, and in the terrified and exhausted state in which I found you, I thought of nothing but getting you to the nearest possible resting-place, and procuring for you the refreshment and assistance you so much required. Let me prevail on you just to alight for one instant, and take a glass of hartshorn and water: it will revive you, and restore the bloom of your cheeks. Mrs. Villiers will be uneasy at seeing you look so lily pale."

Helena felt alarmed by this last suggestion;—Lord Edgeworth had in the mean time summoned his housekeeper to the carriage-door; and Helena, feeling herself grow, every instant, more sick and faint,—seeing, at the same time, a female ready to attend her, suffered herself, almost unconsciously, to be carried into the house.

She took the reviving drops that were

prepared for her, and, soon recovering her breath, and her strength, she became very urgent to depart. Finding that Lord Edgeworth still detained her in conversation, and appeared unwilling to move, she told him that she could not possibly stay another moment, for that her mother would be extremely uneasy at her absence, most especially if her attendant had returned home with the account of the uproar in the street;—"and, besides, my Lord," she added, "consider the impropriety of my longer continuance here: it must already appear extraordinary even to the servants."

His Lordship was taxing his invention for some further stratagem for delay, when Helena becoming every moment more uneasy, walked to the window, to see whether the carriage was really still in waiting. She perceived that it was; but, at the same time, saw a file of soldiers turning suddenly round the corner of the square, close by the horses' heads: at the same moment, the band which attended it, struck up; and, the coachman having, for an instant,

left his box, the horses took fright, and set off at full speed. In a few minutes, the footman entered, saying, that they had run the carriage against a post, and struck off one of the hind wheels.

"Then, I entreat"—cried Helena,—"that your Lordship will send for a chair immediately—or a hackney coach—or any thing.—I must,—permit me to say, I will—depart immediately."

Lord Edgeworth, now dismissing the servant, and advancing towards Helena, spoke thus :—

"My dear Miss Villiers, after the cruel disappointment you have inflicted on me, by a rejection in which I must, yet, hope you do not mean to persist, you cannot suppose me so weak as to lose this unhoped-for occasion of once more endeavouring to soften that beloved, that obdurate heart;" and he ventured to approach nearer towards her, and prepared to seize her hand. She had very impatiently listened to the above address, and, immediately after it, darted from him towards the bell

—saying, in a manner, and tone, of great dignity,—

"My Lord, I insist on being detained no longer: this is not a place, or time, for such expostulations. It must be very late, and my mother has long been anxiously expecting my return."

He had caught her hand, before it touched the bell-string, but, on finding her thus determined, he saw that it would be necessary at least, to affect a readiness to indulge her. He now left the room, and, in a very few minutes, returned, assuring her, that he had ordered a carriage to the door. He filled up the intermediate time with the most exuberant protestation of unbounded passion, and fervent supplications for the blessing of her hand.

"And would you, my Lord," asked she emphatically, "*accept* my hand, unaccompanied by my heart?"

He looked deeply mortified at the implication.—"But," said he, "I could not *resist* your hand, were I happy enough to have it in my option,—and I will trust to

my unwearied love, my undeviating attention for obtaining the heart without which my happiness could certainly, not be complete."

Here the carriage was announced, and Helena almost flew into it, without making any observation on its form, or appearance.

It was a post-chaise: the blinds of the side-windows were drawn up, and it was not until they had driven off at a violent pace, that she perceived there were four horses. Lord Edgeworth had followed her into the chaise: she regarded him with an eye of terror and suspicion, and, observing the turns of the carriage, was too well convinced that it's direction was not to Wimpole Street. She let down one of the front windows, and screamed to the postillions to stop, and suffer her instantly to alight; but they had received their instructions, and appeared not to hear her; and, in a few minutes, she found herself, about the close of the evening, at Hyde Park Corner. She entreated, she implored

Lord Edgeworth to stop the carriage, and suffer her to return to her mother, who would be distracted by her absence. He answered gloomily—

"You would take no pity on me—it is now my turn to be obdurate, and never will I lose sight of you more, 'till you promise to be mine by all the laws of God and man."

"It is profanation to such laws, but to name them at a moment like this, my Lord!—Is it thus you hope to win my *love?*" They had now flown through the turnpike, the drivers having been directed to throw down silver as they passed, to prevent the necessity of stopping, or giving Helena time to apply to any one for relief, —and that it might not be known whither he was gone, he had not even taken a servant behind him.

Helena fell into such agonies of terror, that, had Lord Edgeworth *truly* loved any thing but himself, he had infallibly returned to town, and restored her to her friends: but to him, every generous feeling was

lost in the overpowering consideration that it might possibly be now in his power to secure to himself the compliance for which he had hitherto solicited in vain, and, which this unlooked-for occasion had tempted him to resolve on extorting. This promise, however, she resolutely refused to give; still striving to convince him that every part of his present conduct acted with a repelling, instead of an attractive power, on her mind.

But, the step which he had taken was too desperate to be so quickly retracted; and, still indissolubly wedded to his own despotic will, he resolved, by any measures, to fulfil its dictates. He felt a latent hope that, by drawing the observation of the world on her hitherto spotless fame, he should terrify her into a concession which could alone restore her, if it ever could entirely restore her, to that high degree in the sphere of female dignity, in which she had hitherto moved. With such ungenerous, unworthy considerations, did this illustrious nobleman stop his ears to the

cries of virtue, and harden his heart against the tears of beauty.

For many hours did they pursue their rapid way—the poor Helena, now entreating, now vainly commanding, often piteously lamenting her own unexpected calamity, and still more piteously the agonizing situation of her mother. When all failed, she would fall back exhausted in the carriage, and cease to speak, and sometimes even to weep.

When they stopped to change horses, she made violent efforts, with her hands and voice, to escape, but he held her fast, and had also informed the drivers, and ordered them to give the same information to any persons who might perceive that the lady was forcibly confined,—that she was his sister, and that he was taking her home to her parents, in order to save her from a marriage unworthy of her rank. His further intention was to convey her to his own seat, and there detain her, 'till he could wring from her the promise before alluded to: that point once gained, it was

his *benevolent* purpose to conduct her back to her mother and her friends. But he now found it would be impossible for him, that night, to reach his own mansion, which was situated in the further part of Berkshire.

The day had long since closed in darkness: neither moon nor stars appeared to light them on their way. They were, at length, drawing near to Henley, and there his Lordship determined that it would be best to remain until the morning. He began also to be sensible of some compassion, if not for the feelings of his victim, at least for her bodily fatigues, during the late exhausting day. At Henley, then, they alighted; and Helena, being informed that she was to continue there for the remainder of the night, deemed it most prudent to enter the house with as much outward composure as possible, and, by retiring immediately to her own apartment, take the earliest opportunity of procuring to herself assistance in her escape. But Lord Edgeworth hastily ordered supper, and again his

manner softened, and his heart meekened before her.

He implored her to stay a few minutes, to partake of some refreshment—She bethought herself that, without strength of body, as well as mind, she could not hope to accomplish the escape by which alone she now expected to return to her suffering parent, in time to save her senses. She ate a small part of what was placed before her, took a glass of wine, and very soon retired.

She then requested to see the landlady, —but she was gone to bed. Helena entreated that she might be summoned to her apartment at a very early hour in the morning: — bribed the chambermaid to bring her materials for writing, and, further, obtained her promise to take a letter for her to the post: after these precautions, she immediately wrote the following hasty lines to her mother:—

" O my dearest mother! under what cruel circumstances do I write to you for the first time in my life!—Yet be not

alarmed;—I am in health and unhurt—and the greatest anguish I endure is on your account. I hope poor Marian returned safely to you, and acquainted you with the accident that separated us. In an evil hour, Lord Edgeworth relieved me from that alarm, to plunge me into worse terrors. He has, against all my pleadings, tears, and entreaties, brought me, by force, to this place, which they tell me is Abingdon, (so the attendants had been directed to inform her,) and from this place alone, can you hope to trace me, if I fail in my escape from his power, and he should carry me further into the country: *that*, however, he shall not easily do.—He tells me he will never more lose sight of me, 'till I have promised to be his wife. Certainly, then, he will never, with his own consent lose sight of me at all. What worlds would I not give, if the letter I am writing could reach your hands this night! Kind Heaven unite us once again, my mother! my friend! and never more shall any

earthly event allure me for one moment from your side!

"Farewell! farewell!

"Ever your own

"HELENA."

The poor Helena, having, with many charges of care, accompanied by a liberal fee, delivered this letter to her attendant, now endeavoured to arrange, in thought, a plan for her escape;—then ardently commending herself to the protection of Heaven, she carefully bolted her door, laid herself down, dressed as she was,—and her wearied body, and exhausted mind, found, in sleep, a short oblivion of her wretchedness.

CHAP. LI.

When Helena awoke from her short, unquiet sleep, she started in terror from her pillow, and, for some moments, was unable to recollect where she was, or what dire calamity it was, that oppressed her heart, and bewildered her mind. Too soon, however, the past, and the present were before her; but looking resolutely towards the future, she hastily arranged something like a plan of escape, and ringing her bell, enquired whether it was not yet possible for her to see the landlady? She "had not yet risen, but would shortly wait on her," was the reply.

About eight o'clock, she appeared, with many excuses on her tongue, succeeded by as many voluble enquiries after her *Ladyship*'s health, rest, &c. Helena briefly replied to them, and immediately explained to her the events of the preceding evening, and the situation in which she really stood

with Lord Edgeworth; who, however, she soon found, had prepossessed her hearer by his own story.

To this story, the landlady evidently continued to incline, even when Helena had given her the most solemn assurances of the truth of her own relation, followed by promises of ample recompense for the assistance which she required from her.—But my Lord had out-bribed her, and was, moreover, in the habit of frequenting the house:—in short, the landlady was entirely in his power.

Helena was reiterating her pleadings, and her promises, when a message from Lord Edgeworth solicited her company at breakfast. She refused to comply with the invitation. His Lordship, in reply, sent word that he would then wait on her above.—Thus disappointed in all her hopes from the landlady, and dreading the intrusion of her jailor (as she now termed him), she could not restrain a few tears of indignation; but, hastily brushing them away, she suddenly resolved what course to take,

and at once descended to the breakfast-room. Lord Edgeworth approached her, with the utmost humility of aspect,—enquiring in a voice of softness, how she found herself, and whether she had rested well. She vouchsafed not very minute, or gracious replies;—but, coldly saying, that she was "pretty well," took her seat at the table. When the *ceremony* of breakfast was over, for to Helena it was little more, she addressed Lord Edgeworth with as much composure as she could command, and began by enquiring of him to "what prison she was next to be removed."

"Dearest Miss Villiers, call not by such a name the mansion of my fathers: a residence which I would have you regard as a rural palace, where you will reign the sovereign queen."

"My Lord," said Helena—"an enforced monarchy would be no more acceptable to me than an enforced slavery. But, my Lord, you well know, that, in this blessed seat of rational liberty, you have not the power, still less the right, to fetter

me in any kind. And now, my Lord, having declared my decided sentiments, and reminded you that it is no more in your choice to overpower, than to shake them, I, now, since my tears and entreaties have failed to move you, demand, in the name of my friends,—nay, in the name of justice, and the laws of England,—to be set at liberty."

At that moment the landlord entered: when Helena, while her heart beat with apprehension, addressed him with the utmost dignity of manner, as well as firmness of tone, in these words:—

"Sir,—I call on you to witness, that I solemnly declare myself to be unjustly detained in this place; and that this nobleman, I cannot now say *gentleman*, possesses over me no authority whatsoever. He has taken me forcibly from my friends; and sooner, or later, they will most assuredly demand an account of your conduct, if you do not assist me in withdrawing from his power."

Lord Edgeworth advancing towards Helena,—declared that he would himself be

answerable for all consequences; that all her pretty reasonings were in vain,—the die was cast, and she must be his;—"and remember," said he, "that your fair fame will henceforth rest upon your acquiescence in my wishes. Having fled with me, as it will be concluded that you have done, it is no less necessary to your own honour, than to my happiness, that you should, now, become my wife."

"NEVER, my Lord"—she emphatically exclaimed;—but the landlord having announced that the chaise was ready, Lord Edgeworth had seized her hand, and, in defiance of her shrieks and struggles, was leading her forcibly forward, when—Frederick Beaumont rushed into the apartment.

Helena sprang from Lord Edgeworth's grasp, and crying,—"Save me, Frederick—save me!" flew like a frightened bird into his arms.

Having caught her, for a moment, to his heart, he gently placed her on a chair, and flashing on Lord Edgeworth a look, which,

if anger had a destroying power, would have "made him nothing,"—"What means this, Sir?—and how is it that I find that lady trembling beneath your tyranny?"

"To you, Sir, I should, at no time, assign a reason: judge, then, whether I shall answer an interrogatory *thus* applied!"

"You *will* not give me a reason!—but, by the God that made me, *you shall*."

"*Shall!*—*shall*, Sir!—and by what authority do you presume to demand it?"

"By the right of an affianced *husband*, Sir,"—said Beaumont, with a vehement stamp with his foot.—"Are you answered?"

"I will not *believe* your title."

Beaumont, by a violent effort controlling his rage,—replied—

"Neither this insult, nor your offences against that lady, can be chastised by *words*:—you understand me?"

"Full well, Sir,—as you shall very shortly be aware."

Helena, having, at the beginning of this scene, supplicated even *Frederick*'s attention in vain, had now fainted in her chair

and had not heard the last decisive words.

Frederick, flying to her assistance, and, at the same instant, summoning the landlady, told Lord Edgeworth he would follow him. As soon as he perceived Helena reviving, he committed her tenderly to the care of the woman who had now entered; and, before it was possible for her to prevent him, descended the stairs; then, charging the landlord, at his peril not to suffer any one to approach the apartment in which the lady was, he darted onward in pursuit of Lord Edgeworth, of whom he eagerly enquired, whether there were any means of settling their difference on the spot.

Lord Edgeworth replied, that he had a brace of pistols in the chaise, and would attend him to any place he should appoint. —Frederick proposed a field within a few paces from the town; and Lord Edgeworth advised, that, to avoid suspicion, they should proceed separately to the ground.

They did so.—Lord Edgeworth carried the pistols concealed under his coat :—

"They are both loaded, Sir ;—take your choice."

Beaumont took the first that presented itself, and then, in profound silence, marked the distance ;—Lord Edgeworth approved it.—They fired at the same instant. The ball of Frederick took effect, and Lord Edgeworth fell.——Frederick, untouched, advanced immediately to his antagonist, saying,—

"I fear you are hurt, my Lord."

"I believe I am—but the fault was with myself.—I provoked you beyond what you could be expected to bear. I cannot raise myself ;—but, if you will procure me assistance, I could wish to do you justice before witnesses, in case of death."

Frederick ran for help, and assisted in removing his Lordship to the inn. He then dispatched a man and horse for the surgeon, who was recommended by the landlord.

Frederick now flew to Helena, who, half dead with terror,—extended her arms

towards him, and fell once more almost senseless, into his.—Dismissing the landlady, he tenderly consoled, and soothed his trembling love; again, and again, assured her of his safety; and called her dying spirits back to life, to liberty, and peace.

"But, O Frederick! where have you been? and where is Lord Edgeworth? I know too well that you went out together,—and I *fear* I know for what purpose.—You have not—O Frederick!—I hope you not - - - - - -"

"I hope not"—answered Frederick—"he is hurt, most certainly;—but how could it have been avoided?"

"But, oh! how thankful am I," exclaimed Helena, "that *you* are preserved!—Yet,—if he should die!"

The terrible image of a fellow-creature thus destroyed, and that, on her account; with all the dreadful consequences which might fall upon the head of Frederick, totally overcame her, and she fell on his shoulder in an agony of tears. For a

while, he suffered her to weep without interruption:—at length tenderly reminding her, that *he* was now her protector, he bade her hope that her guardian angel had beckoned him to her relief, and exhorted her to consider that, in a very few hours, he should himself restore her to the arms of her mother.

"O my dearest mother!" she exclaimed—"what a night have you had!—and what a day will you have 'till I am with you again!"

Frederick now half expressed, and, considerately, half restrained, his anxiety to be instantly informed of the particulars of the late strange occurrence.

"It was the merest accident that produced it," answered Helena:—"that it was in any degree premeditated, I do not believe."

"Enough;" cried Frederick;—"he is punished;—perhaps—more severely than I could wish."

"Or, alas! than he *ought* to have been punished—but I will not add to your

regrets—I am assured that you feel them deeply."

"I do!" though I trust in Heaven that the stroke will not be fatal. As to myself, the provocations which he gave me would probably plead strongly in my favour, in case of - - - - what I dare not think of—he is also, very anxious to justify me—before witnesses."—

"He thinks, then, that he shall die?"—

"No, my Love; but, he naturally considers the possibility of danger."

"Let us, then, hope the best:—but by what miracle, Frederick, did you appear at so critical a moment?"—

"By no *miracle* whatever, my Helena. I was wearied out of all patience at my exile from you; and, having contrived a week's holiday, began my journey with the Sun, that I might not unnecessarily lose a single moment. In stopping at this house to breakfast, I was shewn into a room from which I presently heard two voices in earnest debate. In a few mo-

ments, I could plainly distinguish *yours*,—in loud and terrified accents exclaiming, " Never, my Lord."—The words were wings to me—and you know the rest."

He then left the room, for the purpose of enquiring whether the surgeon was arrived.—On his return, after an absence of some continuance, Helena was alarmed at his pallid looks.—To her anxious questions, he replied, that Lord Edgeworth was in violent pain ; that the ball, however, had just been extracted.—" The surgeon," he said, " had cheered him with hopes that, with much care, there would be nothing to apprehend ;—but had ordered that the patient should, on no account, be moved."

With these hopes, the surgeon had expressed his fears ; but they were cautiously hidden from the terrified Helena.

Frederick resumed :—

" He now wishes, my Helena, to see you—*(Helena turned pale)*—before our departure, which I have told him, was delayed only in the hope that the surgeon's arrival would relieve our apprehensions

concerning his situation. 'This,' he said, 'was truly kind, and generous, in us 'both;' and then, Helena, he pressed me very earnestly to inform him whether we are engaged or not. I could not but feel, that, thus solicited by a man circumstanced as Lord Edgeworth now is, you would not object to my satisfying his enquiry,—as far as, alas! I have power to satisfy it. Upon this presumption I told him, precisely, what our engagement is; and on what contingency it rests.

"'Would I had known it sooner,' he cried; 'As it is,—I resign all hope:— 'and now, Mr. Beaumont, I beg your par- 'don.'

"So saying, he held out his hand to me, which, intolerable as his conduct has been, I could not take unmoved:—such is ever the effect of seeing a haughty spirit completely humbled."—

So thought, so felt, the gentle Helena.—

"Well, then! if I must see him," said she, "I entreat that it may be as soon

as possible; for every instant is an age 'till I am on my way to my mother."

They were admitted; and the wounded man, in a feeble tone, thus addressed himself to Helena:

"Miss Villiers, it is necessary to my own feelings,—though I am confident, not to *yours*, that I should entreat your forgiveness, before you leave me.—I have behaved to you in a most unwise, as well as a most unjustifiable manner. Had I known *all*, perhaps, this might have been avoided; but, I had no right to demand your confidence, and, I fear, have now forfeited it for ever!"

"Indeed, my Lord," cried the weeping Helena, "I accept this avowal as a sufficient - - - - - Believe me I not only forgive you, but, most sincerely lament that the late events have had such unhappy,—though I trust—I hope—they will not prove fatal—consequences to yourself."

"A thousand thanks," answered he, "for this goodness!—I deserve it not.—

I have no excuse for the past, but my uncontrollable solicitude to possess a treasure which I was too well satisfied was essential to my happiness: this wish is what Mr. Beaumont, at least, must pardon, since he shares it with me. Nobly has he behaved towards me, and I fain would wish him happy, where I have lost all hope.—I wish *you* happy, Madam, with all the powers of my soul; and I will still endeavour, so to school myself, as, very soon, sincerely, to wish *him* so.

"Farewell, Madam!—farewell Mr. Beaumont."

They were both affected at leaving him; and Beaumont, after leading Helena out of the room,—returned, for a few moments, to take his Lordship's last directions respecting such cares, or anxieties, as might press upon his mind.

He ended, by expressing the warmest wishes for his recovery, and a promise of seeing him again, as soon as consistently with his own safety he could appear abroad.

The chaise being now in waiting, and

nothing further occurring to detain them, Frederick, and his beloved Helena, set off for London;—where they arrived within a few hours. When Mr. Morley' door was opened, Helena flew up stairs.—

"Where is my mother?"—she cried.—Marian, who had been incessantly on the watch, and had flown at the sound of the knocker, stopped her, at the head of the stairs, and falling on her knees, threw her arms around her, and with many tears, thanked Heaven for her return;—"But stay a moment, my dearest Lady," she hastily exclaimed, "you must not surprise my mistress: she is ill a-bed with her fright about you."

"Ill a-bed!" cried Helena, "Oh! I dreaded it—but let me go to her—the sight of me will make her well imme-diately."—

"Indeed, indeed, Ma'am, she will not *know* you yet."

Helena was still more alarmed, but impatiently rushed forward, saying,

"It cannot be—I am sure she will know *me* in a moment."

She was not mistaken.—Mrs. Villiers's delirium had not been of sufficiently long duration to out-last the removal of its cause; and when she beheld her Helena at her bed-side, in health and safety, she recognised her immediately, and starting up, in an ecstacy, which was for some moments painful, soon found relief in tears,—the first she had shed since the alarming disappearance of her daughter.—Long did they continue weeping in each other's arms, before either had power to speak :—Helena at length sobbed out,

"Frederick brought me home."

"Frederick!" cried Mrs. Villiers.

"Yes, my mother; and, when you are better, you shall know all.—Did you receive a letter from me?"

"No, my dearest—not a symptom have I had of your existence for more than four and twenty hours;—do not you wonder that I am alive?"

Frederick, in the mean time, thought

it most prudent to establish himself in a small lodging, at the house of one of his tradesmen, to whom he slightly mentioned that an affair of honour obliged him, for a time, to keep himself concealed. From thence, he wrote, to Mr. Melcombe, a full account of all that had passed;—confessing to him, that, he had been betrayed, by provocations, which he had not fortitude to withstand, into giving the challenge:—testifying the deepest regret at its too probable consequences, to the unhappy offender,—and, in conclusion, submitting himself, by anticipation, to the reproofs, which he expected, and confessed himself to deserve, from his guardian friend.

CHAP. LII.

Mr. MELCOMBE'*s* *Answer.*

"MY DEAR FREDERICK,

"WITH the deepest concern, I have read your letter; and, while I thank Heaven that you have escaped unhurt, and rescued your Helena from oppression, I tremble, *yet*, at the danger to which your life, and her happiness, have been exposed. You tell me that you know my opinions, and anticipate my reproofs: at present, however, you have nothing to fear. When the heart is touched by regret and remorse, it is not then a time, for the censure of a friend. Hereafter, I may,—not reprove, but admonish you; and, perhaps, impart some general opinions, in addition to those I have formerly expressed, together with a few others, of more particular application to the recent circumstances. But, though I fervently hope, and pray, that Lord Edge-

worth will recover, I could wish first to hear that he is out of danger, and then I 'll speak.

"Mrs. Villiers, you say, is ill, in consequence of her alarms: I wonder not, though I deeply grieve, to hear it. What minutes of agony must have filled up the night of her daughter's mysterious absence! How much more than ever do I wish that ye were all in Wales again!—Write to me very shortly, with the latest accounts of Lord Edgeworth; and keep yourself as much in concealment as possible, 'till he shall be advanced towards recovery—an event, of which I dare not suffer myself to doubt. The possibility of his death, every way so much to be dreaded on your account, has shaken all my fortitude. Heaven, in its mercy, avert it, and restore your mind to its former tranquillity! Whatever befalls, if you require my presence, you well know that you have but to command it.—

"Friend of my heart—Son of my adoption—farewell!

"Ever most faithfully yours,

"M. M."

This letter was instantly answered in those breathing terms of gratitude, and affection, to which such a letter had a claim.—

Helena, though her whole frame was suffering from the scenes in which she had been engaged, as also from her concealed anxiety respecting the fate of Lord Edgeworth, and the possible consequences of his apprehended death, strenuously exerted herself in the tender task of nursing and cheering her beloved mother. A few days restored Mrs. Villiers to health;—but her nerves had been so severely shaken, that they still trembled at the slightest touch. The circumstance of the duel had been carefully concealed from her—'till a letter from Mr. Melcombe, who had not been warned of this concealment, and to whom the possibility of it had not happened to occur, betrayed the truth, and gave a new check to her convalescence.

Mr. MELCOMBE'*s Letter to Mrs.* VILLIERS.

"MY DEAREST FRIEND,

"The late occurrences, which have so deeply interested my feelings, in behalf of all my beloved, absent friends, have most peculiarly distressed me by their effect on your sensitive mind, and delicate frame. I would not intrude a letter on you while I heard that you were ill;—but, I have passed the intermediate hours in never-ceasing wishes, and I could almost say, in never-ceasing prayers, for your recovery. My pretty trembling Helena too!—how much has she suffered, and how injuriously was she treated! Yet, how fortunate—may I not say providential;—was the chance that sent our Frederick, *once* more to her rescue! That he should have been provoked into a duel, concerns me very deeply; yet, young and fiery as he is, where his dearest feelings are touched,—I would not harshly censure him: and the provocations he received might have tried an older head, and a calmer spirit. I have

been comforted with the tidings of your daily amendment; but I shall live a life of anxiety till I hear you are well. I will not indulge my own selfishness, by describing to you the fulness of my impatience for the hour of your return.—I seem to have lost you all for a *year*, at least;—and so fastidious has such society made me, that I involuntarily shrink from all other, as far as is *tolerably* consistent with my situation here, which demands some attentions, almost as imperiously as some duties: by far the largest portion of my time, is passed in tête-à-tête with —— Tiger, whom, I fear, I love, in the very next degree to my three dear friends.—He has, indeed, this advantage over common acquaintance,—that he is more intimately connected with the recollection of those dear friends, than any one thing living beside. Then, he never contradicts me,—never interrupts me, when I wish to study,—and though he cannot talk to me, he seems perfectly to comprehend whatever I say to him.—I would fain amuse you

with this trifling, my dear friend, but trust me I feel not the less sensibly the anxieties that have of late affected, and, alas! do still affect,—the spirits of you all.

"Say every thing affectionate for me to our sweet Helena:—To Frederick, I have spoken for myself.—Once more, my dearest friend, take my most ardent wishes for your entire restoration to health, and tranquillity; and believe me, as ever,

"Entirely yours,

"M. M."

Great was Mrs. Villiers's distress at the event which this letter revealed—Helena was with her when she read it.—In truth she was never absent from her for a single hour in the whole day;—and she was now under the immediate necessity of fully explaining the circumstance to which it alluded.—

A week had elapsed since that unhappy circumstance had occurred; and, the accounts which Frederick had since received from the surgeon, had still been very

doubtful.—Truly distressing as were these accounts to Frederick Beaumont, he softened them, as much as possible, to his beloved friends;—secretly forming the most sacred resolutions, that should he happily escape this terror, no provocation of whatever strength, should again induce him to put the life of a fellow-creature to hazard.

During this painful suspense, Mrs. and even *Mr.* Morley, testified the greatest consideration for the feelings of their friends: they were denied to all visitors, excepting Lady Richmond, and Mrs. Falkener; whose cheering visits, and especially those of the latter, were now very frequent.

Lady Richmond felt highly indignant at the early part of Lord Edgeworth's conduct, in the late occurrence; but, pitied, and forgave him when informed of his remorse.

All was confided to her, with the strictest injunctions of secrecy:—she promised to observe them,—and *would*—(if she *could*),

I doubt not, have kept her word;—but, the thing was impossible.—A duel—already talked of,—and, of which she was, from authority, mistress of all the circumstances!—one of the parties so distinguished as Lord Edgeworth; Helena, too, and Frederick—all bright stars in her own system!—the temptation was not to be resisted:—however, she confined herself, *rigidly*, to a confidential communication extending only to a few very particular friends—*they*, with no less self-denial, did the *same*;—and,—in three days' time, *the topick*, in every party, and at every dinner, round St. James's, was the history of the elopement,—the quarrel, the duel—the fair Cambrian—Lady Richmond's "beautiful Beaumont"—and Lord Edgeworth—I wish I could say that the facts were preserved with more sacred caution than the injunction to secrecy!—Lady Richmond, indeed, was accurate, in repeating, what she ought to have buried in silence;—but, there, the progress of truth was at an end.

In one circle, it was confidently asserted, that Miss Villiers had been promised by her mother, to Lord Edgeworth ; and that to elude her vigilance, and disappoint her cruel ambition, Miss Villiers had made a pretence of visiting a poor woman in distress,—and, had there by appointment met young Beaumont, and flown with him to Henley, where Lord Edgeworth had overtaken them, and challenged his rival.—

In another company it was maintained, that, although Lady Richmond did not choose to mention the circumstance—Lord Edgeworth, who was *certainly* engaged to Miss Villiers, had found her tête-à-tête with young Fairford,—who was on his knees before her ;—and that it was to get her out of *his* way, that Lord Edgeworth took her into Berkshire, intending to be married to her, without eclat, at his own seat, and by his own chaplain.

And at a third coterie, it was decisively pronounced, that Miss Villiers had been engaged to Mr. Beaumont, but that, allured by Lord Edgeworth's title, and

fortune, she had quickly been prevailed upon to forsake Beaumont, and run off with his Lordship.

These were the *most charitable* forms, into which the late events were arranged; —while the innocent Helena, devoting her cares to her mother, and her prayers to Heaven, for the life of him who had occasioned all her sufferings, sat quietly at home, little dreaming of the reception which was preparing for her in the world.

On the eleventh day after the duel had taken place, Mrs. Villiers and her Helena were startled by a loud and hurried knock at the door;—and, in a few moments, Frederick Beaumont, with a face illuminated with joy, burst into the room, and throwing himself into a chair, gave Helena a letter, which he had just torn open—exclaiming,—

"He is out of danger! thank Heaven! read it, Helena!"—

It was from the surgeon who had been summoned from London,—and, had been written at Lord Edgeworth's desire.—

Helena read it, in joyful agitation, to her mother; then gave her hand, in congratulation, to Frederick. He tenderly kissing it, rejoiced with her from his inmost heart. —Mrs. Villiers, affectionately embracing them both, wished—how fondly wished! that every threatened ill might pass over them like this.—

"O my sweet mother!"—cried Frederick—"My father hangs over my head like a stormy cloud!"

Mrs. Villiers, who was filled with secret apprehensions from the same quarter, could not, just then, command either spirits, or arguments, to afford him the consolation he so much required.

"This day,"—said Frederick, "I will write to Mr. Melcombe, and visit Lord Edgeworth to-morrow; but, I will not see Oxford, 'till I have had a little enjoyment here. A pleasant *holiday* I have made of it!"

When Frederick arrived, on the succeeding evening, at Henley, he found Lord Edgeworth sitting up in an easy chair; but,

looking so much paler, and more reduced than he had expected, that he involuntarily started at his appearance.

"What!—frightened!" said Lord Edgeworth, smiling; "yet 'no *coward*, 'Hal!'—Come, sit down; I am a stout fellow to what I have been:—in truth I do not think, if I may judge by your countenance, that you have been much easier in mind, than I in body."

Frederick shook his head.—

"Upon my honour, my Lord, I have wished to change places with you a hundred times."—

"That is very kind, I know," said Lord Edgeworth, "but rest assured, it is all better as it is. And, I repeat it—I deserved what has befallen me. How is Miss Villiers?"

"Quite well," said Frederick, "and has never left her mother, nor, I believe, ceased praying for you, since you saw her."—

"Sweet Angel!"—said Lord Edge-

worth, sighing;—"there, talk no more of her.—

"I have had ample time for reflection, Mr. Beaumont,—and I hope it will not be without its use. If pride was not made for man, I know not what fate I had to expect had I been removed to another world, with my full share upon my head."

"Thank God, you are not going to quit *this* world at present"—said Beaumont; "how soon does your surgeon think that you may venture to London again?"

"He talks of a fortnight:—I wish—most earnestly wish—that the time could be shortened!—not on my own account, but—Miss Villiers's."

"Miss Villiers's!—as how, my Lord?—how is it possible that it can, in any way, affect Miss Villiers?"

"Thus, Mr. Beaumont:—I grieve to say, that I hear from my surgeon, who goes every where, and hears every thing, that these events, and ten thousand false-

hoods in their train, are matters of publick discussion at every table in London."

"And of what," cried Frederick, earnestly,—"do they presume to accuse Miss Villiers?"—

"Of every thing that she has not done —of coquetting, deserting, eloping—Oh! ask me not what they say!"—

"The D—l reward them!" said Frederick—

"Amen!"—said Lord Edgeworth—"but what do not *I* deserve, who have caused all this!"--after a pause he resumed—

"Mr. —— thought it best to give me this information, in order that I might take such steps as I should judge necessary, for silencing the reports; assuring me, at the same time, that he had exerted himself to the utmost in the same cause. Were it not for Miss Villiers's share in these accursed calumnies, it would not be worth a walk across the room, to enlighten the whole School of Scandal, and force the truth on their unwilling eyes. But since she is concerned—it will be best, perhaps,

—if Miss Villiers can be prevailed on to suffer it—that you and I should both be seen in her presence together,—and that, in the company of Lady Richmond and Mr. Fairford."

"Possibly it may be so"—answered Frederick, after pausing awhile—"it may throw them all out—with their hateful conjectures—wilful mistakes rather :—oh! it distracts me to think of Helena as the victim of such execrable malice."

Frederick remained at Henley 'till the next day. In the course of his visit, he was surprised to find, in Lord Edgeworth's conversation, much soundness of understanding, mingled with that thorough knowledge of the world, and its ways, for which, he was, perhaps, but too remarkable.

The furious jealousy which contending interests had at first placed between them, having now subsided, Frederick could perceive that the pride of Lord Edgeworth, though not blotted out in a moment, yet was not, as before, perpetually in sight;

that his manners were of distinguished elegance, and that many of the better feelings held place in his character. Still, however, it required all the magnanimity of Frederick Beaumont to see, and converse with, on terms of amity, the oppressor,—even though the fallen oppressor, —of his Helena. Nobly overlooking whatever it was painful to remember, he took leave of his Lordship, with genuine wishes for his speedy recovery.

On his arrival in London, he hastened to Mr. Morley's, with an account of his visit, which was all faithfully reported, save and except the varied, not to say wilful misrepresentations which had so cruelly involved the object of his adoration; and, with which, he could not support the idea of distressing either herself, or her mother.

CHAP. LIII.

WITHIN a few days after Beaumont had written, as before mentioned, to Mr. Melcombe, he received from him the following answer:—

Letter from Mr. MELCOMBE.

"MY DEAR FREDERICK,

"Your last letter afforded me a degree of happiness proportionate to the severe distress I had endured from that which preceded it.

"Never can you, never can I, my dearest Frederick, be sufficiently thankful to a merciful Providence for the recovery of your antagonist. I know your heart, at least as well as you know it yourself; and am satisfied, that, had Lord Edgeworth died, your peace would have died with him.

"I have a little more to say, Frederick;

—because, severely as you have been schooled by contrition and regret, it is still to be apprehended, that your ardent feelings, and lofty spirit, may, in some unguarded hour, again expose you to a like temptation: never, therefore, should I forgive myself, were I now to withhold from you a single thought, which at such a moment as this, will, if worthy to impress you at all, make that impression deeper, and stronger, than at any other time. And I am still further impelled to deliver my full opinions to you, by the hope that you will find, among them, some few suggestions, on this long agitated subject, which, to you, may have the force of novelty; at least, I can truly say, that they have never fallen within my own observation.

"The opening part of my *sentence* against duelling, will make you start: it is nothing less than its close, its hideous resemblance in the event of a fatal termination,—to *deliberate murder:* inasmuch, as it dismisses a human soul, 'unhousel'd, un-'anointed, unanneal'd,'—into the hands of

its Creator; or, with only such preparation as we can imagine to be made, by one, voluntarily throwing into imminent hazard, the life of another, and his own. From this last consideration, as you will immediately perceive, it follows, that, the consequence may be even *worse* to the soul which is divorced from its body by duelling, than it would have been, if so divorced by murder: for, in the latter case, the blow *may* fall on one, who was living in the daily practice of every human virtue; whereas, in the former, it comes down upon a Being, in a state of actual rebellion against his God.

"That you have, yourself, offered no palliation of your offence is very far from being a reason for which I should grant you none. I will, therefore, spontaneously, allow in your excuse, that the provocations offered, were both, of the strongest nature that it was possible for *you* to have received.

"Yet, imagine, for a moment, that *I* had been situated exactly as you were;

with youth, and feelings, like your own, but having at the same time, my clerical character to maintain. What you could not bear I must have borne: this, you will allow: upon what grounds however?—Only that I, a minister of the Gospel, am bound by express engagements, to the observance of those dictates of Christianity by which every man professing himself a Christian, is also bound. The difference between us, however, is in degree only, and not in kind; for you, too, though free from the peculiar obligations of an ecclesiastic, are, in common with him, most solemnly sworn, under your baptismal engagements, to shun an offence which is equally abhorrent from the duties of obedience towards God, and of 'good will towards man.'

"I shall pause but shortly on the worldly and hackneyed argument, that duelling is *necessary*: yet, I have a right to demand, whether it has been proved so;—whether the man who professes that he cannot subdue the offensive pride of another, has fairly, and earnestly, engaged in the at-

tempt:—whether he has assailed the better feelings of his enemy with that 'pleaded 'reason,' and that dignified forbearance, the combination of which, can alone be expected to tame the rage of passion, and strike the offender with conviction, and shame.

"Another argument, which, however, is, in some measure, included in the last, is, that no man can endure to be reputed a coward. The dignified conduct above described, would probably triumph over that reproaah; but, should it fail to do so, those who allege the argument, must be content to rest it on this foundation:—that the heroism which can brave the pains of death, and the WRATH OF GOD, may, yet, warrantably shrink from the terrific *ridicule* of man.

"Nothing, however, that I have here urged, is, in any measure, applicable to the case of a sudden attack. Self-preservation is dictated by the great law of nature; and so, by necessary consequence, is self-defence; nor is it even permitted us

to trifle with the sacred gift of life, by absolute non-resistance, any more than by presumptuous temerity. In support of this assertion, I add, that, although the Saviour of the world has promulgated the mild doctrine of submission, under trivial injuries, yet, did even *he* by his tolerance, both of war, and law, imply an unequivocal permission of resistance against aggression.

" But, deliberate duelling, it is well known, was, originally, the resource of a barbarous age, for the purpose of settling disputed opinions, and establishing doubtful facts:—and, the event of these duels was supposed to be always regulated by divine interposition.

" These were the errors of ignorance;—ignorance, conscious of its own blindness, and, voluntarily subjecting itself to the guidance of infinite wisdom. It was, therefore, at least, pardonable in its errors;—but, we have adopted the sin, without the excuse.

" And, shall England, the envy of na-

tions—the cradle of valour—the school of science—the home of charity,—and in an age in which refinement is our boast, learning our pride, and Christianity our glory—shall *she* suffer a doctrine like this to burst the bands of morality, and overthrow the altars of religion ?——Forbid it reason !—forbid it justice !—forbid it courage !—thou dost forbid it—God !

"M. M."

FREDERICK BEAUMONT'S *Answer.*

"MY BEST FRIEND !

"I have received your letter :—let my future conduct answer it—words are not worthy to acknowledge the anxious friendship in which it originated,—much less to speak, in promises, my conviction of its truth.

"May I but act as reason and principle at this moment impel me to act, and your cares will be all repaid, in the only way by which, to a mind like yours, they can be repaid,—in the final accomplishment of

all those kind, those generous solicitudes, of which I am the honoured, and favoured object. Friend, Monitor,—Father—farewell! may the dearest gifts of Heaven reward and bless you; most ardently wishes and prays

"Your ever affectionate and grateful

"F. B."

Second Letter from Mr. MELCOMBE.

"MY DEAR FREDERICK!

"There is one aspect more under which I am desirous of bringing before you the important subject of my last letter. In that letter, you may remember that, besides insisting at large on the wickedness of the duellist, I further hinted at his folly; having already, therefore, sufficiently considered in what manner he acts, I will now proceed to shew you how he reasons.—For this purpose, I will place myself, ideally, in a few of the principal situations into which he is usually thrown; and, under

each in its turn, defend my supposed conduct in fighting a duel.

"First, then, I will say,—my enemy has done me a gross injury:—*ergo*, I will invite him to an opportunity of increasing that injury to an incalculable extent, by taking away my life, and endangering my soul.

"2. He has wounded me in the tenderest part, and I long to be revenged:—*ergo*, I will put it to an equal hazard whether the weight of my revenge shall descend upon the head of my foe, or upon those of my dearest and fondest relatives, who, in the event of my sudden death, would be left without comfort, if not without support.

"3. He has scarcely injured me at all; what he said, and did, was in a passing gust of anger; I know him to be my friend (or at least not my enemy), at the bottom, and, in my heart, I have already forgiven the offence; but he will not subscribe the humiliating apology, which, the customs of fighting gentlemen have required me to dictate:—*ergo*, to please the

world, which must be the best judge of my own private feelings, I will insist on his meeting me in the field, where we will stand boring holes in each other's bodies, 'till one of us is dead, or at least mortally wounded.

"So much for the challenger;—next for the challenged:—

"1. I have been the aggressor, and have cruelly injured a fellow-creature, with little or no provocation:—*ergo*, I will complete the outrage by doing my best to destroy *him*, and irreparably ruin the peace of all his family.

"2. I have scarcely injured him at all, and a very slight atonement is all that he has a right to claim; this reparation I am very willing to make; but no—my second sees the matter in a different light:—*ergo*, with the utmost good will towards my opponent, I will obey his hostile summons, and, after cordially shaking hands with him, in token of perfect friendship, try whether I cannot shoot him through the heart.—

"Your answer to my last was truly gratifying to me.

"Ever yours,

"M. M."

CHAP. LIV.

It was near the end of May:—the town was full, the weather unusually warm, and Mrs. Villiers, whose nerves had been severely shaken by the late occurrences, and who began to feel her health affected by the heat of the atmosphere, now longed, on every account, to return to her native mountains. Helena took alarm, and solicited her mother to fix an early day for their departure.

"But the fourth of June is near," said Mrs. Villiers to Mrs. Morley. "His Majesty will, in a few days, review his assembled bands of voluntary soldiers. My Helena has a truly loyal heart, and I wish her to see her King surrounded by his FRIENDS.

Helena to the review, as also to place her in the charge of a party of her own friends, who will, afterwards, conduct her to the presence-chamber."

These arrangements occasioned to Frederick the greatest uneasiness.

"Lord Edgeworth cannot be in town so soon," thought he;—"or, at least, will not be sufficiently recovered to attend these parties."

Still, however, did he shrink from the idea of distressing Helena by confessing to her his reasons for wishing her publick appearance to be delayed. In this dilemma, he wrote to Lord Edgeworth, enquiring after the progress of his recovery, and while he expressed a wish that he would not hasten his return imprudently, he could not forbear hinting the immediate cause of his present impatience to see him.

Lord Edgeworth, in reply, assured Beaumont that his anxiety on this subject kept pace with his own; but, confessed, that the surgeon gave him no hope of appearing in London, by the fourth of June.

What could Frederick do?—the day was now at hand; and, to impart to Lady Richmond all the causes of his delicate solicitudes, was impracticable.—

"Helena will be under Lady Richmond's protection, and mine," said he, internally, "and they will not dare even to look an insult to her; and as for their *thoughts*——"

He fell into a deep reverie, and found that he could not despise the censure which might attach to Helena so magnanimously as he wished,—and, as he felt that it deserved.

The day arrived. Lady Richmond, in an open barouche, accompained by two ladies, called at Mr. Morley's for Helena,—and for Frederick—who had breakfasted there, that he might be ready to attend the party. Sir William drove the carriage himself, and gave Beaumont a place by his side.—

The ladies had been known to Helena at Lady Richmond's parties, and she saluted them, as she entered, with her usual courtesy, and politeness. A slight inclination

of the head was all the return they deigned to make. As they drove on, Helena, whose spirits were exhilarated by the beauty of the morning, and her anticipation of a scene which deeply interested her feelings, had scarcely noticed the *abord* of the ladies, and occasionally addressed her conversation to them, in turn with Lady Richmond; but it was now impossible that she should longer pass unobserved the repulsive manner in which they answered—when they *did* answer,—her questions, or remarks. Lady Richmond observed it also, and redoubled her attentions to Helena. Though no one had ventured an insinuation to Lady Richmond, all being well aware of her intimacy with the parties concerned in the late *topick*, *she* was not such a novice in the world, but that she soon divined the cause of this extraordinary reception of her favourite; *what* turn had been given to the story which she herself had so accurately, and confidentially communicated, she could not yet conjecture;—but began too

late to wish, that she had had no confidantes at all.

When they reached the Park, Mr. Fairford joined them, on horseback, and was received by the ladies who were so *exemplarily* reserved towards poor Helena, with the sweetest smiles of affability—although they had enlisted in that division in which it was decided that *he* was the object of the injured Lord Edgeworth's jealousy. Mr. Fairford, however, spoke little to any one but Helena, to whose side he nailed himself and his horse during the whole of the review, explaining to her everything that passed before her, and anxiously catching, from her eyes, and her lips, the lively expressions of interest and pleasure to which the scene gave rise.—

When they all alighted for the purpose of taking a nearer view of the manœuvres, Frederick was in an instant, at Helena's side,—and while saluting Mr. Fairford with all the complacency he could command—inly lamented, almost to agony, that he should be seen, so devotedly attending to Miss

Villiers, yet Lord Edgeworth not of the party.—These solicitudes so entirely absorbed poor Frederick's mind, that he was dead to all interest in a sight which at any other time, would have swelled his heart with pride, and pleasure. He had early joined the University Corps at Oxford, and was one of its most strenuous supporters:—indeed, whatever Frederick Beaumont pursued, he pursued with energy, and to *this* cause, all his opinions, and all his feelings, were deeply pledged.—Helena was somewhat alarmed at the tumult,—to her so new, occasioned by the crowds that pressed onward to catch a sight of the King; and her companions, soon partaking of her alarms, desired to return to the carriage.

As they returned from the Park, the press of carriages at the gate occasioned a difficulty in proceeding—Sir William had, however, driven slowly through it, when a chaise and four came into contact with his wheels, and occasioned a few moments further delay.

The eyes of Helena accidentally glancing into the travelling chaise,—she recognised, pale and wasted as he was,—Lord Edgeworth.—His looks were fixed upon her, and he bent forward with a low bow to herself, and Lady Richmond. Helena made an effort to return it:—at the same instant, she became as pale as his Lordship, —and faintly whispered to Lady Richmond —"Lord Edgeworth!"—

"Lord Edgeworth!" cried her Ladyship, aloud, and bowed to him with a courteous smile.—

Frederick, who had resumed his seat on the box, had turned quickly at his name, and bowed also. All this, including the pale looks, and agitated manner of Helena, had been observed by the ladies already mentioned, and nothing could equal the perplexity it occasioned them.

When Frederick had deposited Helena at Mr. Morley's, and made his adieus to Sir William and Lady Richmond, he proceeded to Lord Edgeworth's house in Grosvenor Square.—He found him reclined on

his bed,—and much indisposed, in consequence of having made an effort beyond his strength, for the purpose of accomplishing what he was unable to accomplish at last. He had in defiance of all advice, and contrary to all prudence, begun his journey the preceding day, and slept on the road, in the hope of reaching London, in time for the Review;—but, in the morning, had so materially suffered from fatigue, that he had been unable to leave his bed 'till near the hour appointed for His Majesty's appearance on the ground. "But, even had I arrived much earlier, Mr. Beaumont," said he, "you perceive how impossible it would have been for me to have joined you."

Frederick expressed his regret at having prematurely, yet vainly, hastened his journey;—and soon returned, with anxious and disappointed feelings, to Helena, whom, with her party, he immediately attended to the Presence-chamber.

There, Helena soon recognised several ladies of her acquaintance.

To some she courtesied,—to others spoke,—but, receiving from all the same species of return—or *no* return which she had met with in the barouche, she began to behold them with astonishment; and, reading in their countenances an expression which she was totally unable to comprehend, she turned to Frederick for assistance.—He, trembling with indignation at what he understood but too well,—affected to smile at the caprices of fashionable females, and pointed her attention to the gay and splendid scene before them—which presented a display of the brightest triumphs of beauty, wealth, and grandeur, in the first and happiest court of the world. The ladies under whose protection Helena had been placed by Lady Richmond, paid every possible attention to their lovely charge; and she had almost forgotten the ungracious deportment of her other acquaintance, before the drawing-room was closed. But, as she was following her party, while Frederick was carefully con-

ducting her through the crowd, she heard, in a whisper behind her,

"That is the famous Miss Villiers, who ran off with Lord Edgeworth; and that is young Beaumont, to whom she is to be married, and who pursued them to Henley, and brought her back again, after half murdering Lord Edgeworth."

Frederick, and Helena, at one instant, turned round to discover who was the speaker. It was a lady—but, of whom they had no recollection. The looks of Frederick were bent upon her with an expression, that no other woman had ever encountered from his eye; and the delicate Helena, on hearing herself thus spoken of, could scarcely preserve herself from sinking. She had now, in a moment found the solution of those looks and manners which to her had been so enigmatical. She clung to the arm of Frederick for support.—

During her drive home, her face glowed with resentment, and once a tear of indignation started to her eye;—but, suddenly twinkling it away, she joined, with as-

sumed composure, in the general conversation.

But the instant she beheld her mother, pride gave way to tenderness, at the thought of what *she* would feel at the communications which must be made;—and falling into her supporting arms—she suddenly burst into tears. Mrs. Villiers was terrified, and supplicated an explanation.

"I cannot, Mamma,—Frederick will tell you all,"—and she ran to hide herself in her own apartment. When she returned to that tender mother, she found her the prey of feelings in unison with her own. Frederick had told all,—and now explained the plan laid down by himself and Lord Edgeworth.

"Cheer up, my sweet Helena," said Mrs. Villiers—"we will *all* go into publick together, and, before we leave London, depend upon it, we will 'make 'these odds all even.'"

"*Must* I see Lord Edgeworth again?" asked Helena.

"I am *sorry*—very sorry to be driven to ask it of you, my Helena," said Frederick, "but I fear there is no other mode of satisfying the world that *you*—my poor love, did not *consent* to run off with him —how dared they suppose——"

"There is no other way," said Mrs. Villiers.—

"Then so it must be!" said Helena—"but—only *once*, I hope."—

"Certainly not more,"—resumed Frederick, "and that, my dearest Helena, in a publick room."

In a few days afterwards, Lord Edgeworth informed Frederick, that Sir William and Lady Richmond were now in their council, and had desired that the meeting of all parties might be at their house,—"and I really think," said his Lordship, "that, in another week, I may very safely meet you there. Yet it will be but a short notice for Lady Richmond to give 'her dear five hundred friends.' However, I could wish that you would wait on her from me, to say that I am quite ready to be invited."

Beaumont went immediately to Lady Richmond, with his Lordship's message.—

" I cannot give less than ten days notice," said Lady Richmond, " or I should not have a *soul* here."—

" You will not have many," thought Frederick, " if you do."—

He had never in his life been so much out of humour with the world, and, had he been eighty years of age, could not have been more so.

When the appointed evening arrived, Lady Richmond presented Mrs. Morley's party, and Helena in particular, to a Lady standing next to her, as if prepared for the introduction. She was a Countess, and so high in character, as well as rank, that her smiles of approbation were fame. The marked attention which this Lady, during the whole evening, paid to Lady Richmond's friends, together with the *extraordinary* intimacy of Lord Edgeworth, Beaumont, and Fairford, had the effect desired;—viz. that of entirely puzzling the cause:—and, from this time, as it was

evident that not one of the indisputable facts lately reported, could possibly be true, and, as there was much humiliation, and *could* be no *pleasure*, in unsaying what had been said, the speculation was at an end; and, in a few days, a naval victory, and a new Opera dancer, wholly divided the attention of the town.

CHAP. LV.

Helena had just closed a letter directing Betty, to prepare for the reception of her Mistress, when Rose Woodland entered, with a face of peculiar interest, and agitation.—

Mrs. Villiers—"hoped that nothing was the matter."—

"Nothing, dear Madam, but too much kindness has now affected me:—see what my noble Lady has just given me for the purpose of relieving, if money can relieve, the distresses of my poor father's situation;—and,"—shewing a bank note for twenty pounds,—"I am extremely so-

licitous to go myself, Madam, to St. Luke's, if you will be kind enough to point out to me the means of obtaining admittance, in order that I may discover whether—whether there is any remaining hope."—

Poor Rose was overcome by the feelings at all times excited in her breast by the recollection of her father. Mrs. Villiers confirmed her in her intentions respecting him, adding a kind promise of endeavouring to procure her further aid, if necessary, by contribution; but, thought it wisest to discourage the still lingering hope of his recovery.

No sooner had Frederick heard this account reported to him by his Helena, than he formed the benevolent resolution of accompanying Rose Woodland on her melancholy visit, and proposed, that for the ease and comfort of her mother, Marian should be of the party.

All was arranged, and Lady Richmond kindly offered the accommodation of her carriage.

When they arrived at the hospital, Fre-

derick, who was obliged almost wholly to support his trembling charge, informed the keeper who she was, and wherefore she was now come; anxiously enquiring whether there had been any amendment in the poor old man since he had last heard of him.

The keeper replied that there had been, of late, an evident improvement in the state of his mind; but that the malady which had retreated from his intellects, seemed now to be spending itself on his body.

" He is much more feeble—much more reduced, Sir, than he has yet been. His recollection, however, gains strength hourly, and he is continually calling on the name of Rose, and wondering whether she is yet alive."

" O then, assuredly he will remember me, Sir," cried she—" for Heaven's sake let me see him!"—

" You shall," said Frederick, in a voice of sympathy; " but you must, indeed, call up a little fortitude, or you will hurt him, as well as yourself."

She instantly raised her head, and walked firmly forward. When they approached his cell, Rose could no longer stand:—she fell half fainting on her knees before him. The bare sight, indeed, of his face, and figure, in which she could find no trace of the father she had deserted, might well deprive her of all self-command. Her first impulse was to cover her eyes from the object which she had so anxiously sought:—but, soon raising them again, she fixed them fearfully upon his face, and exclaimed—

"Do you not know me?" in a voice that went like a dagger into the tender heart of Frederick.

The old man started—stared upon her with a half wandering eye—then cried out in a hurried voice—

"Take her away—take her away—she talks like Rose;" and, turning from her, threw himself down on his couch.

"Look at me again"—she cried—almost suffocated with grief—"I *am* Rose—your own poor, lost, returned Rose."

He then gazed doubtfully upon her, as if afraid of believing her ;—when Frederick, in the hope of rousing his attention, approached him, saying—

"Don't you remember *me*, and how you once bade me find your daughter for you?"

"Aye, but you never did."—

"I did, believe me, and so did a dear friend of mine with me, who has taken care of her ever since."

"Yes, yes—and so has this kind young gentleman," resumed the agitated Rose.

"And are you, indeed, Rose herself?" asked her father, in a piteous voice. "You don't look quite like her—but yet—you are —O yes, you are my poor, poor Rose."— He fell on her neck—and when, after a long interval, he raised his head, his white beard was wet with his tears.

"And do you forgive me for leaving you?" cried the poor agonized Rose.

"Forgive you!—why?—was I ever angry with you?"

"Oh, never, never!" cried Rose, more

" *Did* you leave me?" asked he.—"Well, but somebody took you away, I believe;—And where have you been all this sad time, my poor, poor girl?"

" O, that 's a long story, my dear father,—alas! what an age it is since I have spoken *that* name!" cried she, kissing his hands, and holding them to her beating heart, while she raised her streaming eyes to his.

" I do not think I have remembered you always," said the old man—" I hope I shall not forget you any more."

The keeper told him he need not fear it; adding aside to Frederick,

" The sight of his daughter, Sir, has made a wonderful change;—it is often thus; and I do not think he will relapse."

" I *hope* not"—said Frederick emphatically.

The old man then recurring to the idea of Rose having left him—" And if you did leave me, God forgives—does not he?—I have forgot every thing—but God is good, or you would not be here in these old arms again."

give vent to the emotions which they felt it impossible to suppress.

Woodland now cast his eyes upon Marian, and somewhat anxiously enquired who she was.

"She is my own poor girl," said Rose— "Come hither, my dear Marian."

Marian advanced, with timid and trembling steps. It was some time before she had collected courage to speak to him—at last—

"Will you love your poor grand-daughter," cried she—"for her mother's sake?"

"Aye, there!" said he, with a smile, in which there was a wild and affecting expression, "that's my poor Rose's sweet voice again; be a good child to your mother, my dear."

Rose now informed her father of the many benefactions she had received, and told him that the dearest hope they gave her, was, that of providing comforts for the remainder of his life, and that she was anxious to remove him immediately into the purer air of the country.

For a moment he seemed pleased at this suggestion, but the convulsive emotions

produced by this most unlooked-for meeting with his daughter, had finished the lingering work of madness, time, and sorrow.

"No, my poor Rose! it will not be;—my head is well—thank God it is!—but I am very ill every where else."

She pressed his hand—it was cold to her touch, and her heart was ready to break, while she forced herself to speak some few words of a cheering nature.

"O most thankful am I," said he, "for the return of reason;—yet still, far more thankful for the recovery of thee, my poor stray lamb.—Heaven bless! bless!" continued he, faintly and falteringly—"all who have been kind to thee—and supplied thy father's place!—yes, and they will continue to supply it—never fear, my poor girl—do not weep, Rose—think what I have suffered for twenty years, and more!"—(she did think, with a mind that could ill support its own reflections—) "And be happy that I shall find rest at last—and that it is you who will close my eyes.—God has forgiven all—doubt it not—and if ever—O, if ever you should see your unhappy brother again

—tell him I die blessing—praying for him. O God! forgive him, and let us meet in Heaven!—and his poor mother too—and you, my dear dear child.—Farewell, Marian, be good to—O, kiss me, Rose—God Almighty bless you—and your benefactors."

These were his last words.—After he had uttered them, he lay tranquil, but quite speechless for some hours—while his heart-broken daughter, leaning on Marian, in silent grief,—anxiously watched his countenance, dreading that every breath would be his last. He continued to gaze on her, long after he had lost all utterance—frequently pressed her hand, and drew her to him; and when she bent over him, and kissed his forehead, he gently smiled, and, at length, still holding her hand—gave her one last look—and, without a struggle, expired!—She uttered a piercing shriek, and fell down by his side. It was long before her tears found a passage, but at last they flowed abundantly—and she was so far relieved, that she was enabled to yield some attention to the soothing accents of her daughter—and to express, though with extrème

difficulty, what she wished her to say to the keeper, respecting the remains of her departed father.—Then, after many efforts, she tore herself away, and was conveyed to Sir William Richmond's house; — where every humane attention was paid to her,— and where she was the next morning benevolently visited by Mrs. Villiers and her Helena. When they approached her, she cast her eyes on each, and saying "His last breath blessed you,"—threw her head on the shoulder of her daughter, who had remained with her, and gave vent to a flood of grief :—at last, in panting accents, she exclaimed

"It was I that drove him to madness and death!"

"Nay," said Helena, in weeping pity— "it was a combination of causes—Your mother's death—your brother's—" "But I was the cause of *all*—had it not been my misfortune to please the unhappy wretch who——"

"It *was* your *misfortune*," said Helena —"you were not altogether faulty."

"O seek not to excuse me, sweet lady,

I had no excuse—how different will be your reflections when your mother goes before you to heaven!"

"O, speak not of that, dear Rose,"—cried Helena, who could not think it was in nature to produce one circumstance that could ever alleviate such an affliction;—think how you distress your poor Marian," who had in vain been endeavouring to comfort her.

"I do not forget her," said Rose—and glancing her eye towards her—"let her remember, that of all the miseries which in this vast world abound, none will bear a comparison with remorse;—and that no remorse can approach to that which preys upon the heart of her, whose deeds have brought down the grey hairs of a parent with sorrow to the grave."

END OF VOL. II.

S. Gosnell, Printer, Little Queen Street.